

S E R M O N S

FOR THE USE OF
F A M I L I E S.

V O L. I.

The THIRD EDITION:

By WILLIAM ENFIELD. *u*



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, Bookseller, *St. Paul's*
Church-Yard.
MDCCLXX.

SERMON

PAMPHLET



FOR THE
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E R R A T A.

Page 46. line 3. after *seen* add *us*. Line 10. read *strangers*. Page 90. line 20. read *virtue*. Page 127. line 14. read *instantly*. Page 143. line 8. dele *a*. Page 183. line 6. dele *the*. Page 219. line 14. after *concern* add *which*.

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S E R M O N I.

THE NOTICE OF THE WORLD

A MOTIVE TO VIRTUE.

Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo.

VIR,

J. R. M. O. N. I.

THE NOTICE OF THE WORLD

A MOTIVE TO VIRTUE

By J. R. M. O. N. I.

VII

S E R M O N I.

MATTHEW . V. 14.

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

THE love of reputation and esteem is natural to the human mind. Every man, whose moral taste is not totally corrupted, and who is not sunk into the depths of wickedness, must feel its influence. And those are, generally, most sensible of it, who have attained the greatest perfection in a virtuous temper and character. It is so far from being a dishonour or disadvantage to a man, to be strongly affected by the approbation or censure of others, that it is almost an infallible mark of a good mind, and may be of

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THE NOTICE OF THE WORLD

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By the Author of the

VI

S E R M O N I.

MATTHEW . V. 14.

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THE love of reputation and esteem is natural to the human mind. Every man, whose moral taste is not totally corrupted, and who is not sunk into the depths of wickedness, must feel its influence. And those are, generally, most sensible of it, who have attained the greatest perfection in a virtuous temper and character. It is so far from being a dishonour or disadvantage to a man, to be strongly affected by the approbation or censure of others, that it is almost an infallible mark of a good mind, and may be of

important use in the conduct of life. If our desire of obtaining the good opinion of those around us, and our fear of exposing ourselves to shame and contempt, be so well regulated, as not to counteract the superior motives of religion and virtue; they will greatly contribute to secure us from falling into dishonourable and vicious courses, and to animate us in the pursuit of distinguished attainments in goodness. And surely, in the present imperfect state of human nature, and amidst the great variety of temptations with which our virtue is surrounded, no consideration, which is likely to have an happy influence on our dispositions and manners, ought to be overlooked. While we principally attend to those most important arguments in favour of a life of virtue, which arise from the nature of things, and from the universal presence and righteous government of Almighty God, we should
not

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not forget that our actions are observed by our fellow-creatures, and that, in proportion as we are virtuous or vicious, we shall probably enjoy their approbation, or incur their censure.

This is the consideration to which our Saviour directs the attention of his disciples in the text : “ A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” The meaning of which proverbial expression seems to be this : “ As my disciples ye are called to act an important part before the view of the world. Your whole behaviour will be strictly canvassed, both by those who are enemies, and by those who are friends to the character you have assumed. You ought to aspire after the most perfect innocence and purity of manners, that you may do honour to the cause which you have espoused, in the sight of the world, and may glorify your father
B 3
“ who

“ who is in heaven. For, so public
“ and conspicuous is the station in
“ which you are called to appear, that
“ you might as well attempt to hide
“ a city which is set on an hill, as to
“ conceal your actions from the notice
“ of mankind.”

My present design is, to illustrate the general sentiment expressed in the proverbial language of the text, namely, that our characters are continually exposed to the view of the world; and to shew what influence this consideration ought to have upon our conduct.

We are placed in the present state, by the appointment of heaven, as on a public theatre, on which every man hath his proper part to act, which requires a degree of judgment, attention and resolution, proportioned to its difficulty and importance. A great
multitude

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multitude of spectators are continually around us, who form expectations concerning us, according to the nature of our respective parts; who carefully observe in what manner we perform them; and who are always ready to applaud us, if we support our characters with propriety and grace, or to censure and condemn us, if our performance be careless, defective and faulty. And, besides this, it is highly probable, that the manner in which we behave in life will have a powerful influence upon the characters of those around us. If we act our part well, it may be hoped that their approbation of our behaviour, and their esteem for our persons, may lead them to imitate our example; but, if otherwise, it may be feared that we shall betray them into the same improprieties and faults with ourselves.

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To illustrate these general observations, let us particularly consider, that our actions are observed, by our relatives and domestics; by our friends and enemies; and by the good and bad in general.

In the first place, our characters are constantly exposed to the view of our *relatives and domestics*.

We shall generally find the most careful and attentive observers of our conduct in our own families. Children naturally form a high idea of the wisdom and goodness of their parents, and expect to find them a proper model for their imitation; and their affection for them leads them earnestly to desire whatever may contribute to their honour and happiness. Now, though this esteem and love will incline them, as much as possible, to conceal their faults and foibles from
the

the eyes of others, it will render them more ready to discover every blemish in their characters themselves. They will be surpris'd and shock'd at the sight of mean and unworthy actions, in those for whom they had conceived a high veneration; and will be afflicted by seeing those, whom they love, exposing themselves to contempt and misery, by a foolish and vicious conduct. Or if their reverence and affection for their parents should, at any time, so far blind their eyes, as to lead them to mistake their foibles and faults for excellencies and virtues, the consequence may be still more fatal. Their unexperienced and incautious feet may be betrayed into the paths of folly and vice; and disgrace and ruin may come upon them before they are aware. And surely it must be a powerful restraint upon every one, who is acquainted with the tender feelings of parental affection, to reflect, that by indulging

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indulging his vicious inclinations he must unavoidably either lose the esteem and affection of his beloved offspring, or lead them into the dangerous mazes of wickedness. On the other hand, if parents behave with prudence, integrity and kindness in their domestic relations, and support an honourable and virtuous character in the world; their children will always behold them with veneration and love, and speak of them with respect and pleasure; they will take delight in manifesting their filial affection by their dutiful behaviour; they will contribute every thing in their power towards their support and comfort, in the decline of life; and they will account it their honour and happiness to tread in their steps. What more effectual inducement to a wise and virtuous conduct can a fond parent have, than the thought, that it will thus greatly contribute

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tribute to the pleasure and advantage of his offspring?

And as parents are observed by their children, so children are continually under the eye of their parents, who watch over them with the most anxious concern for their improvement and welfare. It is scarcely possible for a child to commit a fault, which shall not reach the observation of his parents, and wound their hearts. If he early discover a fondness for licentious pleasures, an obstinacy and perverseness of temper, a thoughtless and indolent disposition, or a prevailing disinclination to that which is good, he will "pierce them through with many sorrows." They will observe the steps by which he hath deviated from the path of virtue, with silent grief; will lament the loss of all their endeavours to train him up in the way in which he should go, and the disappointment

pointment of all their pleasing hopes concerning him; and will, probably, "go down with sorrow to the grave."

On the contrary, virtuous parents can enjoy no greater comfort, than that of seeing their children walking in the truth. The first appearances of a pious and grateful, a humane and compassionate, a liberal and generous disposition in their offspring, will afford them unspeakable pleasure. They will behold their progress in wisdom and goodness, with constant attention and the highest delight. They will observe with growing satisfaction, their diligence in the cultivation of their understandings, their caution in guarding against the snares of vice, and their readiness in embracing every opportunity of doing good. They will esteem such children their richest treasure, and greatest glory; and will delight to assist their progress in knowledge and virtue, and to afford them every

every possible advantage, for passing thro' the world with honour and comfort. Now, what can be better adapted to preserve young persons from falling by the numerous temptations which surround them, than the consideration, that they cannot indulge themselves in vicious practices, without filling the hearts of their parents, who have been their most liberal benefactors and best friends, with inexpressible grief? What can be more properly urged upon them, to excite them to circumspection and diligence, than the thought, that all their improvements will be observed by their parents with heart-felt pleasure? Let children then remember, that "a wise son maketh a glad father, and that a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother;" and let them frequently consider their parents as saying unto them, "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine."

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In fine, in whatever relations we stand in domestic life, whether we be parents or children, husbands or wives, masters or servants, our behaviour will be constantly observed by the several members of our respective families, and will promote their pleasure and happiness, and increase their esteem and affection for us, or will fill them with pain and disgust, and become the occasion of innumerable evils.

Nor will our characters be observed in our families alone: they are exposed to the view of the world, like "a city set on an hill, which cannot be hid;" and we may be assured that there will always be persons, who, either through kindness and friendship, through an idle curiosity, or through ill-nature and malice, will stand still to observe them.

Those

Those whose hearts are united to our own in the bands of friendship, will take notice of our conduct, with a tender concern for our reputation and happiness. They will keep a strict watch over us, that they may assist us by their advice, when we are in danger of erring, or reclaim us by their reproof, if we have gone astray. If they see us acting with wisdom and honour, their love to us will be increased, and they will themselves be confirmed and established in goodness by our example. But if they observe us pursuing a licentious and vicious course of life, they will be afflicted, in proportion to the degree of goodness of which they are themselves possessed, and the strength of their affection for us; they will be ashamed of their connection with us, and will think themselves obliged, for their own honour and safety, to dissolve it. Or, perhaps their attachment to us will

dispose them to view our faults in too favourable a light, and to “become partakers of our sins.” Now, what generous man could allow himself in vicious practices, if he were duly sensible, that he must hereby, either give pain to his best friends, or do them an irreparable injury? Or, who that is not a stranger to the feelings of the friendly heart, will not embrace virtue with double pleasure when she comes recommended by friendship?

The eyes of our enemies, likewise, are upon us. If there be any who, through interfering interests, envy, ill-nature, mis-understanding, or any other means, are become our adversaries, we may be certain that they will always keep a severe and censorious eye upon our conduct. If we happen to make one false step, or even to approach towards the appearance of evil, we shall undoubtedly be observed

ed and censured by them. They will triumph over us with malicious pride, and will proclaim and aggravate our faults before the world. They will do all in their power to increase the number of our enemies, and will themselves be more confirmed in their prejudices against us. But, if we behave with honour and generosity towards all men, and with kindness towards those who have injured us, they will probably, in time, become tired of their resentments, will see and acknowledge our merit, and be reconciled unto us; or, at least, we shall silence and shame them, "giving them no evil thing to say of us;" and shall have a witness in our own breasts, that they "hate us without cause."

But farther, we are beheld and observed by the good and bad in general. Good men, from their love of

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virtue,

virtue, and their zeal for its interests in the world, will rejoice to see us supporting and recommending it by our own practice, will cordially embrace us as their brethren, and will point out our example to the imitation of others. We shall thus make all the good, who are "the excellent of the earth," our friends. Whereas, if we act inconsistently with our religious profession, for our own sakes, for the sake of the public, and for the honour of religion, they will continually behold us with concern and grief. On the other hand, bad men will have their eyes upon us to take encouragement from our example, if they see us running into the same excesses and follies with themselves. They will glory in us as their associates, and will hereby become still more confirmed and hardened in their evil ways. But, if they see us resolutely refusing to "follow a multitude to do evil,"
and

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and holding fast our integrity, amidst the most powerful temptations to give it up; they will be constrained publicly to acknowledge the superior excellence of our characters, or, at least, secretly to revere them; and it may be hoped, that they will be engaged, by beholding the “beauty of holiness” in us, to forsake the path of folly and wickedness, and to become wise, and good, and happy.

In these instances, every man is subject to the notice of his fellow-creatures. None are placed in stations so obscure, as not to have a certain sphere in which they act, and in which their actions are observed by those around them. But the higher our rank in life is, and the more public the character in which we appear, the more are we exposed to the observation of the world. A humble cottage, situated in an obscure valley, will sometimes

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times attract the eye of the traveller; but a city set on an hill will be more frequently and generally observed. Those who engage the notice of the multitude by the magnificence of their habitations, the elegance of their dress, and the splendour of their retinue, must expect that men will sometimes turn their eyes from the lustre which surrounds them, to observe their behaviour and manners. They will naturally look for something as much superior to the common level in the latter, as in the former. They will expect to find the great as much distinguished by their virtues as by their station, fortune, and appearance. If, upon a closer inspection of their characters, instead of finding that honour, generosity, and public spirit, which they had annexed to their idea of greatness, they see them capable of acting from the most mean and selfish principles, and of being unjust, oppressive

pressive and cruel ; they will soon learn to forget their borrowed ornaments, and to despise them in proportion to the degree of respect and homage, which they had before paid them. Though they may still continue to observe the outward forms of deference and submission which custom requires, they will look upon them as inferior to the meanest beggar that waits at their door, who hath preserved his honour and integrity.

Those, likewise, who are employed in public offices are, in a peculiar sense, like a "city set on an hill, which cannot be hid." Every man, in the civil or religious society, over which a magistrate or minister presides, thinks (and justly thinks) that he hath a demand upon him, considers him as the servant of the public, and observes the manner in which he performs the duties of his station, and in which he
acts

acts in private life. It is reasonably expected, that those who are employed as instructors or rulers of others, should not only be faithful and diligent in the discharge of their office, but peculiarly exemplary in their general behaviour. Nothing immoral, nothing contemptible, nothing ridiculous in such persons, can escape the public notice, or be observed without peculiar disgust. So prejudicial is “a little folly, to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.”

What hath been said to illustrate the sentiment of the text should teach us (in the first place) openness and simplicity of behaviour. How can any man expect to conceal himself under the mask of hypocrisy, when so many eyes are upon him? He must be an adept indeed in the deceits of unrighteousness, who can so artfully support a fictitious character, as to deceive

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deceive his friends and his enemies, and even those of his own house. Amidst such a multitude of spectators, it is manifest that the most accomplished deceiver must be in continual danger of detection. It is therefore surely the wiser and safer course, to lay "aside all guile and hypocrisy, "and renounce the hidden things of "dishonesty;" and to maintain that uprightness of intention, and simplicity of manners, which will give us confidence in the sight of all men.

The doctrine of our text, "that we are continually exposed to the notice of the world," may, likewise, teach us caution and circumspection. It is of great importance, for our own sake, and for the sake of others, that we should take good heed unto our ways. If we be immoral, or greatly imprudent, in our conduct, it is impossible that we should escape censure.

We

We can scarcely do a wrong action without exposing ourselves to the pain of being blamed and reproved by our friends, and condemned and reproached by our enemies. And every false step which we take, may be the occasion of uneasiness to those whom we most highly esteem and love, or may be the means of leading them into dangerous and destructive paths. How important then is it that we should “ walk circumspectly, not as fools, “ but as wise !”

The consideration that we are continually observed by our fellow-creatures should likewise excite us to make the highest possible attainments in virtue. The more amiable and exemplary our characters are, the greater pleasure shall we give to our virtuous relatives and friends, and the more beneficial will our example be to the world. Let us then always consider
 ourselves

ourselves as placed on high before the view of mankind : and let us be ambitious, to preserve such purity of character, that the malicious eye of our enemies may be able to discover nothing to our disadvantage, and to acquire such perfection in goodness, that the most sanguine expectations of our friends concerning us may not be disappointed. Let us be careful, that our “ light may so shine before men, “ that they, seeing our good works, “ may glorify our father who is in “ heaven.”

And, while we pay a due regard to the observation of our fellow-creatures, let us not forget, that we are always under the eye of a Being, who searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts, and whose approbation is of infinitely greater importance than that of all the world. Numerous as the spectators

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of

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of our actions among our fellow-creatures are, it is possible we may deceive them, for they “judge by the outward appearance;” but God cannot be deceived, for “he looketh at the heart.” “There is no darkeness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the Almighty.” Let us, then, make his approbation the chief object of our ambition. In comparison with this, let us learn to disregard both the applauses and censures of the world; and, to preserve ourselves humble under the one, and patient under the other, let the language of our hearts always be: “It is a small thing for me to be judged of man’s judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

ON DOMESTIC PEACE.

*Felices ter, et amplius,
Quos irrupta tenet copula; nec malis
Divulsis quærimoniis,
Supremâ citiûs solvet amor die.*

HOR.

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ON THE MASTHEAD

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S E R M O N II.

G E N E S I S XLV. 24.

See that ye fall not out by the way.

THIS was the parting advice which *Joseph* gave to his brethren, after that affecting interview, in which he had been discovering to them, what long absence and the change in his appearance and condition had concealed, that he was their brother. He had been expressing his unalterable affection for them, by saying unto them, “Be
“not grieved nor angry with your-
“selves that ye sold me hither, for
“God did send me before you to pre-

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“serve life.” He had just fallen upon his brother *Benjamin’s* neck, and been weeping over him. At the close of this interesting scene, while his heart was full of tenderness, and the tears of affection and joy were flowing from his eyes, when he was sending them away to his father with the news of his safety and prosperity, he knew not how to take his leave of them more properly, or to give them a stronger expression of his concern for their welfare, than by exhorting them to cultivate mutual harmony and love. He was sensible that this unexpected interview with a brother, whom they had so unkindly and inhumanly treated, would probably furnish them with no very pleasing reflections, on their way home. He justly apprehended, that each of them, to exculpate himself as much as possible from an action of which they were all, by this time, heartily ashamed, would be desirous of laying

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laying the blame upon his brother; and that this might, perhaps, become the occasion of hatred and contention. When therefore he parted from them, he thought the best advice which he could give them was, " See that ye
" fall not out by the way."

And the same caution may, with the utmost propriety, be addressed to all those who stand in a family-relation to each other. It is their lot to pursue the journey of life together; and it depends, in a great measure, upon themselves, whether it shall be agreeable and pleasant, or uncomfortable and tiresome. An ungoverned violence, obstinacy, or petulance of temper will beset their path with innumerable thorns and briars; while a meek, contented and obliging disposition will smooth their way, and spread perpetual sunshine around their steps. It therefore highly concerns
them

them to pay a serious and constant regard to the advice of the text. More particularly,

The importance of domestic peace and harmony will appear, if we consider how necessary it is to the regular and chearful discharge of the relative duties. Frequent animosities in families must by degrees weaken, if not entirely destroy, those benevolent affections which are the foundation of all social virtue. When the flame of love is daily suppressed by the damps of ill-nature and contention, what can be expected, but that it should at last be totally extinguished? Or if it should still survive, with what pleasure or satisfaction can the kind offices of domestic life be performed, in the midst of daily dissensions and endless strife? How can those, who are continually at variance with each other, heartily and chearfully unite in promoting their
common

S E R M O N II. 33

common interests, and contribute their several parts towards their mutual support and happiness? What delight or improvement can such families find, in social acts of religious worship? Or, with what propriety can those who have spent the day in angry debates, or in hateful fullness, at the close of it, bow down together before that Being, who is the author of peace and lover of concord, and pray that they may be adorned with that “meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price?” Can it be wondered at, if those, who are so unhappy as to live in the midst of the flames of contention, lose by degrees their concern for the happiness of their families, acquire an indolent and thoughtless turn of mind, abandon themselves to the pursuit of unlawful pleasures, and seek that peace and satisfaction abroad, which they find it impossible to enjoy at home? When a
man

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man meets with unprovoked resentment, peevishness and ill-nature, where he hoped for the warmest returns of esteem and love, he must either be totally void of sensibility, or be possessed of unusual greatness of mind, not to sink under, or cast off, his burden.

On the other hand, domestic harmony confirms and increases mutual affection between the several members of a family, and hereby renders all the relative duties of life easy and pleasant. Under the influence of this principle, each of them will chearfully exert himself, in his proper sphere, for the advantage of the little society, to which he belongs, and in which he enjoys the most substantial comfort and satisfaction. He will apply himself with diligence and alacrity to the business of his station, animated by the prospect of participating the fruits of his labour with those for whom he entertains the highest

est affection. The hope of being esteemed, approved and applauded by his dearest relatives and friends, will furnish him with a continual and powerful motive to the practice of virtue. And he will readily perform the most difficult or laborious task in their service, supported by a sincere and tender concern for their welfare, and assured that he shall obtain—the only reward which he desires—their gratitude and love. What will not a good man cheerfully undertake, to serve those with whom he hath long lived in peace and comfort, and with whom he hath enjoyed a series of the most satisfying pleasures which human life can afford?

The preservation of domestic peace is, moreover, of the utmost consequence with regard to the younger branches of a family. When parents live in continual variance with each other, they will find themselves little disposed

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disposed to pay a suitable regard to the education of their children. Their attention will be diverted from this most important concern, by their frequent animosities and trifling debates; and their minds will be too much unsettled and discomposed, to perform it with any degree of pleasure or success. Or, if they should attempt to cultivate the dispositions and manners of their children, it is probable that a spirit of contradiction, or a tenacious adherence to their own opinions, will lead them to pursue different, and even contrary plans of education. The principles and maxims, which one inculcates with all his might, the other will with equal zeal censure and condemn. Those faults, which one will excuse and overlook, the other will think it necessary to punish. Thus authority will be opposed against authority, and influence against influence. The obvious consequence of which

which will be, that they must lose that filial respect and veneration which is the ground of filial obedience. Or, at least, their children will learn, to consider one of their parents as ruling them with wisdom and tenderness, and the other as treating them with unreasonable severity; to look upon the one as their friend, and the other as their enemy. But, if this should not be the case; if we suppose them to agree in the instruction and discipline of their offspring; what will precept avail, where it is continually contradicted by example? How can they expect their children to love one another, and to cultivate the benevolent and friendly affections, while they themselves are continually indulging the contrary passions, and living together in strife and variance, enmity and hatred? The natural effect of such examples must be, that their tempers will be soured, their moral

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taste

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taste vitiated, and their manners corrupted.

Whereas, when those who are at the head of a family are united in sincere affection, and live together in constant harmony, their children have an amiable pattern perpetually before their eyes, which cannot fail of attracting their esteem and love, and which will probably form them to a similitude of disposition and manners. And, where this union of hearts subsists between parents, it strengthens their affection for their offspring, and prompts them to unite their utmost endeavours for their improvement and welfare. They employ their joint skill and influence in the important work of education; and, in consequence of this, their judgment is regarded with the highest deference; their advice is received with the greatest respect; their authority is doubly
revered;

revered; and they train up their children in the way in which they should go, with ease and advantage.

Domestic peace is, likewise, an object most worthy of our serious attention, because it greatly contributes towards our improvement in virtue, and prepares us for appearing in the more public scenes of life. Every private family is a school of virtue or vice. Our dispositions and characters are not formed in public, but in the retired walks of domestic life. If we here accustom ourselves to indulge a resentful or peevish temper, we shall form a habit of anger or fretfulness, which we shall carry with us into the world. On the contrary, if we exercise forbearance, meekness, and benevolence, in our daily intercourse with our relatives and friends, we shall establish the most amiable affections in our hearts; shall learn to look up-

on all mankind as our brethren ; and shall be upright and honourable, kind and generous in all our transactions with them. In confirmation of this we may remark, that the instances of those who behave with affection and tenderness towards their relatives and dependents, and at the same time are unjust, unfaithful, or oppressive in their conduct towards others, are exceedingly rare : whereas, it is far from being unusual for persons who, in public, assume the appearance of civility and good-nature, to be, in their own families, peevish and morose. And hence it is, that when we see a man who behaves with propriety in domestic life, we immediately receive a bias in his favour, and are always disposed to employ him in our service, or make him our friend, much sooner than one of a contrary character.

Farther

Farther to illustrate the subject under consideration, we may observe, that domestic peace is of the utmost importance to secure unto us the pleasures of domestic life. If you would be convinced of this, visit the dwelling of discord and strife, and observe the disposition, and behaviour of its inhabitants. How doth every cross accident discompose their minds, and overspread their countenances with gloomy fullness, or furious resentment! How doth the most trifling circumstance totally incapacitate them for the enjoyment of life! In vain are their tables covered with plenty, their habitations adorned with elegance and taste, and their persons clad in the richest attire. Their angry passions, like the jaundiced eye, discolour every object around them. They are as incapable of relishing the most luxurious entertainment, or of enjoying the most delightful scene, as

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the man whose appetite is taken away, and whose imagination is bewildered, by a raging fever. So true is the observation of *Solomon*: “ Better is a
“ dinner of herbs, where love is, than
“ a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.”

Wherefore is it that we may so frequently observe those, who appear to be possessed of every thing in their own families which can afford them satisfaction and comfort, continually roving abroad in search of happiness; passing from one scene of amusement and dissipation to another; and never so discontented and restless, as when they are obliged to pass a solitary hour at home? It is because their own ungoverned passions and foolish humours, or those of the persons with whom they are connected, will not permit them to enjoy the calm and heart-felt pleasures of domestic life. For, to the man who is blest with
tenderness

S E R M O N II. 43

tendernefs and fenfibility of heart, and who hath been fo fortunate as to form agreeable connections in life, his own habitation will always be the moft welcome place, and his domeftic relations will furnifh the trueft and moft lafting pleasures. Go to the humble cottage, in which peace and love have fixed their abode, and “ behold how “ good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Observe the unaffected chearfulnefs which fmiles in their countenances; hear in what artlefs language they exprefs the contentment and joy of their hearts; fee with what good-will they perform a thoufand offices of civility and kindnefs towards each other; with what fatisfaction they fit down together to their plain but wholefome repaft; with what unfeigned gratitude and joy they unite to prefent their thanksgivings to the Father of the families of the whole earth, and
how

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how chearfully and affectionately they commend themselves and each other to the care and blessing of heaven. Dwell for a while in this happy family, and learn the inestimable value and excellence of domestic peace and love. Where hearts are thus united by the firmest and most pleasing of all bonds, mutual affection, and where this affection is manifested in a constant series of kind offices, there indeed is the seat of contentment and happiness; there will that solid satisfaction be found, which is in vain sought for in the crowded and noisy scenes of business and amusement. The man, who can command the serene and silent pleasures of domestic life, may leave to the sons of ambition and vanity, to the slaves of intemperance and debauchery, and to the dupes of taste and fashion, their imaginary delights; and may say with
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S E R M O N II. 45

the full consent of his heart, "I have
"enough."

But, bright as this scene is, we must not expect to find it entirely free from clouds. Whatever degree of contentment and happiness we may possess in our own minds, or in our domestic relations, we cannot hope to be without our share of affliction from external causes. "Man is born
"to trouble as the sparks fly up-
"wards;" and why should we flatter ourselves that we shall be exempted from the common lot of humanity? Our present tranquillity and ease will most probably be interrupted by sickness of body, by losses or disappointments in our affairs, or by some other calamitous events. Or, however, it is appointed unto us all once to die; and, though we should enjoy an uninterrupted course of domestic peace and happiness to the end of our days,
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the painful moment of separation must arrive, when we shall go down to the grave, and “ the eye which hath seen. “ shall see us no more.”

Now, under the afflictions of life, and the immediate prospect of death, judge ye, whether true satisfaction and comfort are to be found in the families where peace and love have been strangers, or in those in which they have taken up their constant residence? Those who have lived together in a state of variance and enmity have no inward consciousness of harmonious and well-regulated affections; no pleasing recollection of a peaceful and happy life ; no testimonies of the esteem and love of their friends, to support and comfort them in their last moments. But those who have spent their days in the continual exercise of benevolent affections, and in the daily performance of reciprocal offices

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offices of kindness, may, at this season, derive unspeakable satisfaction from the remembrance of past life; may with composure and cheerfulness resign each other into the hands of that Being, who hath been the guide of their youth, and the support of their age; and may possess a humble hope of meeting again in some happier state, and dwelling for ever in the regions of eternal peace and joy.

Such are the arguments by which domestic peace and harmony may be recommended. It is necessary to the regular discharge of the relative duties; it is of the utmost consequence with regard to the education of children; it greatly contributes to our improvement in virtue, and prepares us for the more public scenes of life; and, finally, it is attended with the highest satisfaction and pleasure. What advice then can be more worthy of
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the serious regard of all those who are united in the relations of domestic life, than that of the text, "See that ye fall not out by the way?"

If you be desirous of following this advice, and of enjoying all the pleasures and advantages of domestic peace; be careful not to suffer your angry passions to be inflamed by inconsiderable and trifling incidents. It frequently happens, that circumstances of the most trivial nature occasion dissensions in families, and produce the most serious and fatal consequences. To prevent this, always maintain an high sense of the importance of family peace, and esteem it as a precious jewel, in comparison with which most other things are trifles.

Accustom yourselves to submit to the opinions and comply with the humours of others, in matters of little conse-

consequence, even when they are contrary to your own inclination or judgment. A positive, tenacious, obstinate temper hath its foundation in pride, ignorance, and ill-nature, and is the occasion of innumerable dissensions. To preserve you from it, imitate the conduct of *Abraham*, who, when a contest arose between his own servants and those of *Lot*, said unto him, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left-hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right, then I will go to the left."

To conclude; cultivate mutual affection and esteem, by daily performing towards each other all the kind offices in your power. This is the most important

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portant and comprehensive rule for the preservation of domestic peace; for if you love one another sincerely, you will be little disposed to fall out by the way. The observation, which the apostle *Paul* makes concerning love in general, may be justly applied to that affection which ought to subsist between the members of the same family: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "See then that ye love one another with pure hearts fervently:"

And may the God of love and peace be with you! Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N I I I .

A G A I N S T F R A U D .

Discite Justitiam moniti.

-VIR..

THE R M O N

AGAINST TRADE

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S E R M O N. III.

LEVITICUS XIX. 13.

Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour.

IF the importance of subjects proper for public discourse, be determined by their connection with the duty and happiness of mankind in general, the subject to which these words direct our thoughts, will appear worthy of an attentive consideration. There is no virtue, which men have more frequent occasion to practise, or which is more immediately conducive to the welfare of individuals, or of society, than that

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which is enjoined in the text, equity, or honesty, in our transactions with each other. Let us then, at this time, enquire into the nature and foundation of this virtue ; point out some of the various ways in which men are in danger of violating the laws of justice, in the affairs of trade and commerce ; and consider the obligations which we are under to avoid every species of dishonesty and fraud in our dealings. “ Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour.”

From the earliest ages of the world, men have formed themselves into societies for their mutual pleasure and advantage. In this state, they do not enjoy all the good things of life in common ; but every man possesseth some share of them, which is considered as his own personal property. In this state, likewise, a great variety of arts, manufactures, and employments

ments have been invented, and are in continual use, for the benefit and convenience of the whole. From these circumstances arise the relations, which subsist between the buyer and the seller, the master and the servant.

Now it is with reference to these relations, that the virtue of honesty, in the usual acceptation of the term, is principally to be exercised. An honest man, if he purchase any commodity from another, will make him that return, which custom or their mutual agreement requires: if he sell any part of his property, he will seek no greater advantage from it, than will be generally allowed fair and honourable, or than he himself would be willing that the buyer should gain, upon the supposition of an exchange of circumstances: if he engage another to serve him in any particular art or occupation, he will give him that reward for
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his service which he hath a right to expect, from mutual agreement, general custom, or the manifest reason of the thing: if he undertake to serve another in his proper calling, he will perform the business he hath undertaken, with fidelity and punctuality, and will demand no more than a customary and reasonable satisfaction for his labour: in a word, an honest man, at all times, and upon all occasions, “doth
“unto others, as he would wish that
“others should do unto him.”

From this account of honesty, we may easily infer, wherein the violation of the great law of justice between man and man consists, or when a man may be said to defraud his neighbour.

The *purchaser* is guilty of fraud, when he makes use of falshood or low cunning to diminish the value of any commodity, in the estimation of its
pro-

proprietor. This is the character which *Solomon* describes in his book of proverbs: "It is naught, it is naught, "faith the buyer, but, when he is "gone his way, he boasteth." He likewise defrauds his neighbour, when he takes advantage of his ignorance, to obtain any thing for less than its real value; when he receives any part of his property, and applies it to his own use, without being careful to make him the equitable return, at the time when he may reasonably expect it; and lastly, when he makes that wise and merciful institution of the legislature, which was only intended for the security of those whom misfortune hath rendered incapable of answering the demands of equity, a protection for extravagance and knavery.

The *seller* defrauds his neighbour, when he takes advantage of the ignorance or mistakes of the purchaser, or
makes

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makes use of arts to impose upon his judgment.

The *master*, or he who employs labourers under him for hire, acts a dishonest part, when he lays upon them burdens too heavy to be borne; when he requires harder or longer labour from them, than was at first agreed upon, without making them a proportionable acknowledgment; or when he deprives them of their wages, or with-holds them beyond a reasonable time. The law of *Moses*, in this last particular, was equitable and merciful: "The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee until the morning:" that is, shall not be retained after the time when they become due.

The labourer or *servant* acts contrary to the rules of equity, and defrauds his neighbour, when, without good reason, he quits the business he hath under-

undertaken, and leaves his master in difficulty ; when he performs his engagements in a negligent and defective manner ; or when he takes advantage of the confidence which his master hath placed in him, to embezzle or injure his property.

These are some of the mysteries of iniquity, which the sons of unrighteousness and fraud have invented, and too often practise, in affairs of trade and commerce. You cannot live in the world, without being frequently obliged to observe such instances as these. It is well if you have only *seen* them. Happy is the man, who hath never fallen by the snares, which the wicked are perpetually laying in the path of the just ! But still more happy is he, who, in the midst of a thousand examples of fraud and injustice, and a thousand temptations to follow the multitude who do evil, hath held fast
his

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his integrity ! When we meet with a man of this character, we may behold him with admiration and esteem, and say concerning him, as JESUS said of *Nathaniel*, “Behold an *Israelite* indeed, “in whom there is no guile !”

Besides the instances of dishonesty already enumerated, there are many others which might be mentioned ; but without insisting upon these, I proceed to lay before you the principal arguments, to guard you against all the low arts of fraud and deceit, and to enforce the observance of the strictest honour and most perfect equity, in your dealings.

And, in the first place, let it be considered, that the observance of the injunction of the text, “Thou shalt not “defraud thy neighbour,” is of the highest importance to the welfare of society. If men were not generally governed

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governed by a principle of honour, one man would be afraid of entrusting his property in the hands of another; jealousies and suspicions, contentions and quarrels would perpetually arise; mutual confidence and credit would cease; and commerce itself would expire. What is it which gives life to trade, in all its branches, but that regard to honour and equity, which, numerous as the instances of injustice are, still triumphs in the world, and encourages one man to commit his most valuable possessions to the care of another? Who doth not see, that honesty is the only true cement of society, and the chief support of all commercial intercourse? Who doth not lament the unhappy effects which are produced, where this noble principle happens to fail? Where, in any single instance, a man lurks in the secret places of unrighteousness, and wastes in luxury and extravagance that wealth,

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which the honest industry of others had gained, and which their unsuspecting innocence had put into his hands; how often do we see one calamity after another arising from his unexpected fall! a flourishing family broken up! relatives and friends involved in difficulties, and overwhelmed with grief! many fair traders embarrassed, perhaps ruined! the mourning widow, and the desolate and helpless orphan deprived of their little store! Even in the present state of things, such scenes as these are alas! far from being unusual. What then would be the consequence, if injustice and knavery were daily to gain ground in the world, and at last to become universally prevalent? surely nothing less than universal confusion and wretchedness. On the contrary, were all unrighteousness and deceit banished from the earth, what a long train of evils would take their flight with them! what uninterrupted

S E R M O N III. 63

rupted peace and harmony, what perfect satisfaction and happiness would ensue!

But it may be observed, farther, that the virtue of honesty is of essential importance to the happiness of individuals.

The honest man is most secure from disappointment in business, and has the fairest prospect of success in his undertakings. Injustice and fraud may indeed, in some instances, be the most expeditious, but they are far from being the most certain road to wealth and greatness. It often happens, that the artful and designing knave is discovered, and his schemes of iniquity are blasted, before he hath accomplished his purpose. After much care and labour, and many fears and anxieties, he may very possibly betray himself, and frustrate his own designs. But the

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honest man pursues the plain and beaten path of diligence, prudence and integrity, till he gradually obtains a competence, which he can behold with satisfaction, and enjoy with pleasure.

Honesty is likewise the best guard of our reputation. A man cannot take so effectual a method to become universally despised, as to do a base and dishonest action: for, mankind, amidst all their difference in opinions and customs, seem to be generally agreed in this; to encourage and reward integrity and honour, and to discountenance and punish injustice and fraud. Let two men be in every other respect equal; if the one have the character of an upright and good man, and the other be deemed treacherous and fraudulent, it will be no difficult thing to determine, which will be generally espoused, employed and assisted, and which will be treated with neglect

S E R M O N III. 65

neglect and contempt. Men may flatter themselves, that they have learned the art of deceiving the world, and that they can execute their dishonourable schemes, and, at the same time, support all the reputation and enjoy all the advantages of the honest man. But the world is more quick-sighted than such persons are aware: it requires more art and resolution to support a fictitious character, than such persons are willing to apprehend. Though their true features may long lie concealed under the mask of generosity or piety, a thousand accidental circumstances may occur to take off the disguise. And how odious, how contemptible must they appear, to all who behold them in their natural colours! how must even those who, for the sake of their families or friends, choose to conceal their faults, in their hearts despise them! And, when their characters are laid open to public view,

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66 S E R M O N III.

with what shame and confusion must they appear before the world without their wonted disguise, and meet the faces of those whom they have so long attempted to deceive! On the other hand, how happy is the honest man, in the esteem and love of all around him! He is frank, open and consistent in his whole behaviour. His words agree with the sentiments of his heart; and his actions correspond with his professions. He disguises no low and sinister views, under the specious pretences of private friendship or public spirit. He makes use of no mean artifices, to accomplish his designs. He lays no snares in the way of others, to betray them into difficulties. His wisdom is always tempered with sincerity, and seasoned with humanity, meekness and charity. If he cautiously avoids evils, and declines dangers himself, he never willingly brings them upon his neighbour. If he

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he embraces favourable opportunities of serving his own interests, he is careful not to injure those of others. He is never so selfish, as to be unjust or uncharitable to any man. He may, therefore, chearfully suffer even the eye of envy and malice to scrutinize his actions, and may submit to have his most secret thoughts and purposes laid before the world: for the more accurately his conduct is examined, and the more thoroughly his designs are known, the greater applause will he receive. He can execute his schemes, and transact the business of his station, without the painful apprehension of making any discovery to his disadvantage. He always enjoys, and is sensible that he always deserves the confidence of those with whom he is connected. He provides for himself a resource against unforeseen calamities, in the friendship and generosity of those whom he hath often faithfully served. And if he should meet with disappointment,

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ment, no one will dare, or be disposed, to insult his misfortunes. The wife will still honour and respect his character; and the generous and compassionate will be ready to assist him. He shall not be ashamed in the evil time; his reputation shall shine forth, with a pleasing lustre, from under the cloud of adversity.

The honest man, likewise, enjoys the continual happiness of being satisfied from himself. While the man who defrauds his neighbour must often suffer the reproaches of his own mind; while his unrighteous deeds must often rise up, like horrid spectres, to torment his guilty spirit; the man of integrity, who hath, on all occasions, endeavoured to act an upright and honourable part, possesseth a perpetual fund of self-enjoyment, of which no change in his external condition can deprive him. If he enjoys an abundance

S E R M O N III. 69

dance of the good things of life, he hath the happiness to reflect, that it is the fruit of his honest industry, and the blessing of heaven; he can say with the Psalmist, "The Lord hath rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me; for I have kept the way of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God." Or if he meets with disappointment and trouble, he hath this for his consolation, that "they have not befallen him for any iniquity in his hands;" and can triumph, if not in the success of his undertakings, in the innocence of his life. Having the testimony of a good conscience, he can meet all the calamities of life with composure, and look forward with humble hope to the day, in which he must part with all his earthly possessions, and give an account of himself to God.

Let

Let it be remembered, in the last place, that all injustice and fraud are highly displeasing to the Almighty, and that uprightness and honour will always be acceptable in his sight. We may be assured from the constitution of the world, in which equity and justice are of such vast importance to the general welfare, and from the natural bias of the human mind towards integrity, that these are virtues which the great author of nature highly approves. And this sentiment is frequently inculcated in the holy scriptures. “ Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, (saith the Psalmist) who shall dwell in thine holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.” It is the language of the prophet *Isaiab*: “ He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, he

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“ he that despiseth the gain of oppres-
 “ sions, and that shaketh his hands
 “ from holding of bribes, he shall
 “ dwell on high, his place of defence
 “ shall be the munitions of rocks;
 “ bread shall be given him; his wa-
 “ ters shall be sure.” The prophet
Amos addressed the *Israelites* in this
 manner: “ Hear this, O ye that swal-
 “ low up the needy, even to make
 “ the poor of the land to fail, saying,
 “ When will the new moon be gone,
 “ that we may sell corn, and the sab-
 “ bath that we may set forth wheat?
 “ making the *ephah* small, and the
 “ *shekel* large, and falsifying the ba-
 “ lance by deceit; the Lord hath
 “ sworn, Surely I will never forget
 “ any of their works.” The apostle
Paul instructed his fellow-christians,
 “ That this is the will of God—that
 “ no man go beyond, or defraud his
 “ brother in any matter.” And Je-
 sus Christ, the great teacher sent from
 God,

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God, hath left his disciples this excellent summary of their duty on this head; “ All things whatsoever ye
“ would that men should do unto
“ you, do ye even so unto them.”

We have then the greatest possible inducements to lay aside the hidden things of dishonesty, and to do justice and judgment every man with his neighbour. If we act in this manner, we shall contribute our part towards the removal of those evils which injustice and fraud have brought into the world, and towards promoting the public tranquillity and happiness; we shall take the most direct and certain road to success and reputation in the world; we shall possess that satisfaction in our own minds, which will be a perpetual source of comfort and joy; we shall obtain the approbation of Almighty God, “ who
“ loveth righteousness, and whose
“ counte-

S E R M O N III. 73

“countenance beholdeth the upright;”
and having faithfully “served our ge-
“neration, according to the will of
“God,” we shall, finally, “be re-
“compensed at the resurrection of the
“just :”

Which may God of his infinite mer-
cy grant!

H S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

ON BIGOTRY.

Tros Rutulufve fuat, nullo discrimine habebo.

VIR.

S E R M O N I V.

ON RIGORITY.

The Remedy for, and the Effects of, Rigority.

By

S E R M O N - I V.

J O H N I V. 9.

The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

UPON the first reading of these words, one would imagine, that the *Samaritans* must have been a people of such a vile and abandoned character, that their neighbours found it necessary, for their own safety, to avoid, as much as possible, every kind of connection with them; or, at least, that they had been guilty of some dishonourable and iniquitous practices

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towards the *Jewish* nation, for which it was impossible they should ever make sufficient atonement. Had they violated some solemn league or covenant; had they betrayed their neighbours and allies into the hands of some common foe; had they made an unprovoked attack upon them, and attempted to bring *Judea* into subjection to *Samaria*; such circumstances as these might justly have been deemed a sufficient ground for that estrangement and disaffection, which subsisted between the two nations.

But the narration from whence the text is taken, and the *Jewish* history, give us a very different account of the matter; an account not much to the credit either of the *Jews* or the *Samaritans*. From thence we learn, that the inhabitants of *Judea* looked upon *Jerusalem* as the only place in which public solemn worship was to be paid

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paid to Almighty God ; and that the *Samaritans*, (who were a mixed people, composed partly of the remnants of the *Jewish* tribes, and partly of proselytes from other nations) on account of some antient tradition, fancied that the mountain *Gerizim* was, above all other places, holy unto the Lord. “ Our fathers (saith the *Samaritan* woman to our Saviour) worshipped in this mountain, and ye say, “ that in *Jerusalem* is the place where “ men ought to worship.” This ridiculous dispute, with some other trifling differences concerning the ceremonial part of devotion, was the sole cause of that incurable alienation and hatred to which the text refers. On this foundation, the enmity of the *Jews* against the *Samaritans* was raised to such an height, that (according to one of their own historians) their chief priests and grand senate actually passed a decree, by which *Anathema*
was

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was pronounced upon the *Samaritans*, and it was declared a most heinous crime, for a *Jew* to partake with them in their common repasts or entertainments. Hence it was, that when our Saviour asked a *Samaritan* woman for a draught of water, to refresh himself on his journey, she was astonished at the request, and said, “How is it, “that thou, being a *Jew*, askest drink “of me, who am a woman of *Sama-
“ria?* for the *Jews* have no dealings “with the *Samaritans*.” Such were the consequences of a difference in opinion, concerning the place in which God should be worshipped.

Strange infatuation and stupidity! That men should ever imagine, that Almighty God, who filleth heaven and earth with his presence, can be displeased with those who worship him in spirit and truth, because they neglect to present their devotions on
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one particular spot of ground! That they could ever be so full of religious madness, as to break off all friendly and charitable connections with their neighbours, for no other reason, but because they refused to go from their own country to another, to worship their maker! Yet such were the opinions, such was the conduct of a people, who valued themselves upon their religious privileges, and boasted that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

And the same bigoted attachment to particular schemes of faith and modes of worship, which manifested itself among the *Jewish* people, hath appeared, in numerous instances and various forms, through every age of the christian church, to the present time. Many of the first christians, who were converts from *Judaism*, retained such a fondness for the ceremonial

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nial observances, to which they had been accustomed, that they could not, with the least degree of patience, endure the conduct of those who contended for a further extent of christian liberty. Nay, even *Peter*, who had constantly attended upon the wise and benevolent discourses of his divine master ; from whom, therefore, one might have expected more enlarged sentiments, and a more liberal and generous behaviour ; was so much under the influence of this prejudice, that when he came to *Cornelius*, a *Roman* centurion, “ who was a devout man, “ and one that feared God, and gave “ much alms,” he thought it necessary to excuse himself for having departed from the custom of his nation, by saying ; “ Ye know how that it is “ an unlawful thing, for a man that “ is a *Jew* to keep company, or come “ unto one of another nation ; but “ God hath shewed me, that I should

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S E R M O N IV. 83

“not call any man common or un-
“clean.”

And in later ages, the same spirit of bigotry hath appeared in a thousand different shapes of deformity. Sometimes it hath led one sect of christians, in public council, to declare the opinions of another erroneous and heretical, and even to cut them off from the society of the faithful, and pronounce them in danger of everlasting damnation. The express words of an ancient and well-known creed are ;
“Whosoever will be saved, before all
“things it is necessary that he hold
“the catholic faith : which faith, ex-
“cept every one do keep whole and
“undefiled, without doubt he shall
“perish everlastingly.” Nay, such hath been the madness of blind zeal and bigotry, that many who have called themselves the followers of the meek and benevolent Saviour of the world,

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world, not satisfied with sentencing their fellow christians to eternal misery in a future life, have, at present, condemned them to such dreadful sufferings, as it is shocking to human nature barely to relate: as if all men, who had too much understanding or conscience to believe, or profess, the same absurd and pernicious opinions with themselves, were monsters, which it was necessary for the safety of human society to destroy.

And, though it may be hoped that the fury of this persecuting spirit is in some measure abated, there are still great multitudes in the christian world, who seem to hold it necessary—or prudent at least—that “the *Jews* should “have no dealings with the *Samaritans*.” If a man, who professes the same religion with themselves, happens to differ from them merely in speculative opinions, or external modes
of

S E R M O N IV. 85

of worship, they will, as much as possible, shun all intercourse with him. In conversation, they will be continually upon their guard, lest they should be corrupted by his discourse, and will behave with such an air of indifference and contempt, as speaks in the most expressive manner the language of their hearts: "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou." If they have an opportunity of performing an act of kindness to him, they will either imitate the *Levite*, who, when he saw the wounded stranger lying in his way, passed by on the other side; or, at best, will bestow their favours with that superciliousness and pride, which will destroy most of the merit, and all the grace of the action. And they will be peculiarly careful, as much as possible, to avoid all connections with persons of heretical principles, in the affairs of religion. Such instances of bigotry,

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strange as they may seem to many, are frequently to be met with among those who profess a religion, the distinguishing characteristic of which is love. It cannot, therefore, be improper for us to guard against the most distant approaches towards uncharitableness, by reflecting, that it proceeds from mistaken and pernicious principles; that it betrays a narrow and contracted spirit; that it hath been the occasion of the greatest evils; and that it is inconsistent with the profession of christianity.

Bigotry proceeds from mistaken and pernicious principles. Those who are under its influence suppose, that Almighty God confines his favour to that particular sect, to which they have the happiness to belong. They imagine, that they are the only people whom God hath seen fit to enlighten with the knowledge of his truth,

S E R M O N IV. 87

truth, and that all around them are in most pitiable darkness and error. They look upon their little circle as a sacred inclosure, on which the Almighty smiles with partial favour, and upon the rest of the world, as a wild and barren wilderness, over-run with the weeds of ignorance and vice. No wonder, therefore, that out of mere humanity, they exert themselves to bring others into this happy fold. No wonder that the bigoted *Jews* in the time of our Saviour, and that bigots in all ages and countries have compassed sea and land to make one proselyte.

But such persons are surely chargeable with the grossest self-flattery and delusion. For, is not God the father of all the families of the earth? Have not all the inhabitants of the world, even the most rude and uncultivated, an equal right to hope for his protec-

88 S E R M O N IV.

tion and favour? And doth he not actually bestow the gifts of nature, and distribute the bounties of his providence, at large and without limitation? Doth he not visit every clime, and every creature with the light of the sun? how then should it have entered into the heart of man to suppose, that his favour is confined to any particular tribe or nation, or that he bestows the necessary means of virtue and happiness only upon a small and inconsiderable part of mankind? The Almighty is equally present in the wild and savage desert, as in the most refined and civilized nations of the world. He is alike the father of all mankind. And nothing can be more absurd and groundless—more vain and presumptuous—than for a small and inconsiderable body of men to expect to ingross the favour of heaven to themselves, as if they alone were the remnant that should be saved. The
folly

S E R M O N IV. 89

folly of the pretension is too obvious to need illustration. Yet on this weak foundation hath bigotry often been established.

Another opinion, which hath given rise to much uncharitableness and persecution, is, that no man, who doth not, in the main, embrace the same faith with ourselves, whatever shining moral qualities he may possess, can reasonably hope to be accepted of God. Men have indulged a vain imagination, that something else, besides an upright intention and a good life, is necessary to intitle a man to the character of a true christian, and insure him the enjoyment of that happiness which the gospel promiseth; and that this, which is to give value to all his virtues, and, more than all, to recommend him to the favour of heaven, is the zealous profession of a particular system of faith, and a strict adherence to a parti-

cular mode of worship. This absurd and romantic notion hath been so deeply rooted in the minds of many, even in the christian world, that they have not been able to treat persons of a different religion or sect with kindness or civility, and have shunned all intimate and friendly intercourse with them, as a deviation from the strictness and sanctity, which their christian profession requires.

After what hath been said, it is obvious to remark, that bigotry betrays a narrow and contracted spirit. If once men allow themselves to enquire with freedom into the principles of religion, they will soon gain such just and rational conceptions on this head, and be so fully convinced of the importance of virtue above every thing else; they will become so sensible of the difficulties which attend every speculative scheme and established system,
and

S E R M O N IV. 91

and so well acquainted with their own ignorance and weakness, that they will have little inclination to censure and condemn others, for a difference in opinion. They will find themselves incapable of treating their brethren with the least degree of neglect or reserve, merely on this account, while their temper and character appear, on the whole, deserving of esteem. When men have had an opportunity of forming an extensive acquaintance with the world, and have seen that there are, in all religious sects, and among men of all professions, persons of worth and goodness, and persons who would be a disgrace to any society; they soon learn to treat all speculative controversies, and party distinctions, with that difference and contempt which they deserve; they will soon be convinced, that it is only real goodness of character which deserves our chief regard, and that this is very far

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far from being confined to any particular body of christians, or of men. It is only those, who have never thought enough to doubt of any thing, and those who have never had an opportunity of leaving the little circle in which they were born and educated, who can be greatly under the influence of a spirit of bigotry and uncharitableness. And we may be certain, that our moderation and charity will always increase, in exact proportion with our progress in the knowledge of men and things.

Farther to manifest the odious nature of bigotry, let us take notice of its unhappy consequences. The fatal effects of uncharitableness and persecution in the christian church, we have already seen. And to this we may add, that a bigoted temper renders a man unhappy in himself, and discontented with the world; incapable

S E R M O N IV. 93

ble of feeling the refined and generous sentiments of unbounded benevolence, and knowing the pleasure of loving all mankind as his brethren. It makes him uneasy in the society of those, who are perhaps much wiser and better than himself. It cuts him off from innumerable sources of enjoyment, of which that man is possessed, who loves every good man as his friend and brother, and who can with pleasure transact business, exchange favours, or pass a social hour, with an honest and sensible man, without knowing, or wishing to know, to what church or sect he belongs, or by what party name he is distinguished. This temper likewise creates the most unhappy dissensions and animosities in families. Though the religion of JESUS be calculated to promote peace and love, this evil spirit hath often occasioned the accomplishment of his prediction; "The father
" shall

“ shall rise up against the son, and the
 “ son against the father, and a man’s
 “ foes shall be those of his own house.”

A difference in religious opinions or practices hath frequently given rise to contentions, between those who might otherwise have enjoyed, without interruption, the blessings of domestic harmony and affection.

In the last place, a spirit of uncharitableness is totally inconsistent with the profession of christianity. We have, in the story from whence the text is taken, a striking proof, that bigotry was not the temper of JESUS. He doubtless knew the difference which subsisted between the *Samaritans* and the *Jews*; but he knew too, that the God of heaven and earth is no local deity; that all places are equally under his eye; and that he always dwells in the heart of the good man, as his most sacred temple, and receives his praises, where-

S E R M O N IV. 95

wherever they are offered, as the most acceptable sacrifice. He therefore took no part in the controversy between the two nations; and when he wanted a supply of water to relieve his thirst, he saw no reason why he should not cheerfully ask, and thankfully accept it from the hand of a *Samaritan*. Nay, he did not scruple to converse with this woman of *Samaria*, with the same freedom and condescension as if she had been one of his own nation; insomuch that when his disciples, who had not yet cast off their prejudices in favour of Judaism, came near, they marvelled that he talked with the woman, and were ready to say unto him, “why talkest thou with her?”

And if we examine the doctrine and character of our Saviour, in general, or consider the nature and design of his religion, we shall see

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see that christianity is directly opposed to all uncharitable and bigoted principles and behaviour, and is admirably adapted to dissolve all distinctions of sects and parties, and to unite all men in the bands of the most unconfined good will and generous affection. “ There is neither *Jew* “ nor *Greek*, (saith the apostle *Paul*) “ there is neither bond nor free, for “ we are all one in Christ Jesus.” The new commandment which Christ gave his followers, and on which he laid the principal stress, was, that they should love one another. He makes this the badge, by which they were to be distinguished from the rest of the world. “ By this shall all men know “ that ye are my disciples, if ye have “ love towards one another.” Now, what temper can be more inconsistent with that benevolence which christianity requires, than bigotry and uncharitableness?

Let

S E R M O N IV. 97

Let us then diligently examine our own hearts, to discover whether any secret remains of this unchristian spirit be yet lurking within us, and whether it appears, in any instances, in our behaviour towards our brethren. And let us learn, from what hath been said, to embrace all our fellow-christians and fellow-men in the arms of the most cordial and unlimited affection. Instead of treating those, who are distinguished from us by their religious opinions or customs, with neglect and contempt, or with coldness and reserve, let us convince them by our generous, friendly, and affectionate behaviour, that though we differ from them in judgment, we are one with them in heart. Laying aside all bigoted attachment to particular systems of faith, and modes of worship, which hath always been found to be a zeal without knowledge, let us direct the attention and ardour of our minds to

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more

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more important and useful objects. Let it be our chief concern and highest ambition, to promote the love and practice of universal righteousness, both in ourselves and among our brethren. For the same Apostle who hath exhorted us to "avoid foolish questions, because they are unprofitable and vain," hath taught us, that "it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

ON COMPASSION.

*Homines ad Deos nulla re propius accedunt, quam salutem
hominibus dando.*

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S E R M O N V.

J O B XIX. 21.

*Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O
ye my friends, for the hand of God
hath touched me.*

CAlamitous indeed was the condition of *Job*, who, under one of the heaviest burdens with which any of the sons of men were ever oppressed, was obliged thus to supplicate compassion, from those who called themselves his friends. Afflictions like his were sufficient, one would have imagined, to have extorted a tear of
pity.

pity from his most implacable foe. Despoiled of part of his substance by the sons of violence and rapine; stripped of the rest by the immediate hand of heaven; bereaved of all his children in one dreadful moment, and that at a season when the sight of their harmless festivity had elated his heart with unusual joy; tormented in his own person by a most grievous, painful, and loathsome disease; overwhelmed with all these calamities at once; at once cast down from the summit of tranquillity and prosperity, into the lowest depths of poverty and distress; who could behold this complicated scene of wretchedness, without lamenting his unhappy fate? It would surely require none of the warm attachments and tender sensibilities of friendship, to awaken compassion in the heart, on such an occasion as this. With the common feelings of humanity, one would imagine it impossible to behold
the

the afflictions of *Job*, and not to weep over them. Yet, to double the anguish which this good man was doomed to feel, even his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, and from whom he had reason to expect the utmost tenderness and humanity, gathered themselves together against him. They came unto him, indeed, with all the vain and useless parade of grief; when they drew near, they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven; and they sat with him in silence for the space of seven days. But, when they opened their lips, instead of labouring to sooth his sorrows, and inspire him with patience and fortitude; instead of pouring the balm of consolation into his wounded spirit, they expressed the most unkind and unfriendly suspicions concerning his integrity; they upbraided him with having been guilty of some secret wickedness, which

which had brought these evils upon his head; they heaped their reproaches upon him, and persecuted him with cruel words. Though his calamities were sufficient to melt the most flinty heart to compassion; though he besought their sympathy, with all the eloquence which distress could inspire; though he said unto them, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me;" still they turned a deaf ear to his intreaties, and, under the cloak of friendship, continued to wound him by the most ungenerous and inhuman treatment. Well might *Job* say unto his friends, "Miserable comforters are ye all."

With such unfeeling hearts, may we, my brethren, never enter the habitation of wretchedness, or hear the voice of lamentation!

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The world in which we live is full of misery, that, wherever we turn our eyes, we are sure to meet with objects which demand our compassion. Distress appears before us in a thousand different forms ; and in every shape she supplicates our notice, with an importunity which the humane and generous heart is unable to resist.

If we visit the house of mourning, we shall there, perhaps, behold the weeping mother standing near the corpse of her darling child, and, in all the agony of grief, lamenting that the dear object of her most anxious cares, her tenderest affections, and her fondest hopes, is for ever torn from her arms, and refusing to be comforted, because it is no more : Or we shall see the faithful friend depressed and overwhelmed with grief, for the loss of one who is dear unto him as his own soul,

soul, and expressing his undissembled and heart-felt sorrow, by his pensive looks, his silence, and his tears.

When we go into the dwelling of indigence and poverty, we naturally expect to find, that distress and wretchedness make a part of the family. And though, to the unspeakable satisfaction of the benevolent mind, and to the honour of the great disposer of all things, we shall probably meet with content and happiness in the meanest cottages, much oftener than we might at first imagine; yet it must be owned — for many mournful proofs are, alas! continually before our eyes — that want and misery are too nearly allied, and too commonly dwell under the same roof. We shall frequently see the honest and industrious poor burdened and fatigued with excessive labour; obliged to satisfy the cravings of nature with a coarse
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and scanty meal ; and perplexed with anxious cares and fears concerning the future day, saying, “ What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and “ wherewithal shall we be cloathed?” And, as if the natural evils of poverty were not sufficient, we shall often find the rich and great adding to the load which nature hath laid upon their poorer brethren, the still more grievous burdens of neglect, contempt, and oppression.

But, of all others, the most affecting scene of calamity which we can behold, is, when a fellow-creature is at once oppressed with the difficulties of want, and tormented with the pains of bodily affliction. And yet, how commonly are these evils united in the same person! How often do we see those, who have no other means of supporting themselves and their families than by the daily labour of their hands,

hands, suddenly rendered incapable of pursuing their employments, by some calamitous accident, or confined to the bed of sickness, by some painful and threatening disease! In this situation, the unhappy sufferer is unable to provide for himself the supplies which nature expects, and to procure that assistance and relief which his disorder requires. At a season when he stands most in need of plenty, to minister to his support and comfort, he is in the greatest danger of being oppressed and harassed by want. His whole family suffers with him; and that not only by sympathy, but by actual participation of his calamity. While his bodily pains are such as require the utmost exertion of his fortitude, he hath the additional affliction to see his dearest relatives involved in the greatest difficulties, through his misfortunes. While he is incapacitated for labour, their principal spring of support

port is dried up; the foundation on which they have long rested fails them; and at the same time that they are depressed with grief on his account, they are filled with painful apprehensions on their own. If any thing in the world requires, demands, constrains our compassion, it is surely such complicated distress as this. It speaks to the heart of the generous and humane, this pathetic language, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me."

And every man should consider himself as immediately addressed in supplications like this; for every man is, or ought to be, a friend to the wretched. When we are in distress, we naturally consider every one, who hath it in his power to afford us his assistance, as our friend and brother, and look up to him with a confident

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expecta-

expectation that he will not refuse to pity, or, if possible, to relieve us. And when we behold others in a condition which calls for our compassion, nature requires that we should do as much for them, as we ourselves should expect, in like circumstances; that is, as much as we are able.

Compassion is a debt which one human creature owes to another; a debt, which no distinction of sect or party, no imperfection of character, no degree of ingratitude, unkindness, or cruelty will cancel. When we see that a fellow creature hath need of our assistance, to enquire to what country he belongs, what religious tenets he professes, or what party-name he wears, betrays the most contemptible bigotry and weakness; but to deny him our charitable aid, or to treat him with the least degree of indifference or neglect, because he happens

S E R M O N V. III

to profess a religion, or belong to a society different from our own, is unpardonable inhumanity. He who can withhold the tear of compassion, or delay the offices of charity, 'till he hath satisfied himself concerning such trifles as these, 'hath a narrow contracted spirit, a cold unfeeling heart, which can never do honour to any religion or any sect. The object who solicits my notice may be a *Mahometan*, a *Pagan*, a *Jew*, or a wild *Barbarian*; but what have I to do with his religion, or his country? It is enough for me, that I am assured he deserves my pity, and needs my assistance. He may have been a person of vile and abandoned character; he may even have greatly injured or offended me; but is he, on that account, the less my brother, or the less in need of my kindness? If I see him in distress, it is not now a time to call to mind his faults, or to upbraid him with his

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conduct:

conduct: the more unworthy he is of my friendship; the greater affronts he hath offered me; the better opportunity I have of manifesting my disinterested benevolence, and my forgiving temper.

Compassion is a plant which flourisheth in the human heart, as in its native soil. The damps of superstition and bigotry may blast it; the weeds of pride and avarice may rise up around it, and check its growth; but it is impossible that it should be entirely eradicated or destroyed. It seems implanted within us by our Maker for the most wise and benevolent purposes; to expand our views and desires beyond the narrow limits of our own private interest; to awaken in us a proper degree of attention to the welfare of others; and to afford us the most refined and god-like pleasures. To “weep with them that weep,”

S E R M O N V. 113

“weep,” yields to the generous mind a gratification little inferior to that which it feels, when it “rejoices with them that rejoice.” If there be a pain attending the sensations of compassion, it is a pain which is abundantly recompensed, by the satisfaction and complacence with which it is attended; a pain from which the good man wishes not to be excused. He whose soul is formed of tenderness, and whose heart naturally and warmly interests itself in the concerns, and participates the afflictions, of others, experiences such happiness in the exercise of these affections, that he cannot help pitying and despising those, who are entirely wrapt up in themselves and their own affairs, and are strangers to the pleasing sensations of benevolence and compassion.

So great is the satisfaction which results from the sentiments of humanity,

manity, that there is scarcely any consideration which more fully vindicates the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, in permitting the numerous evils of human life, than this, That they afford us an opportunity of exercising the most amiable affections, and partaking of the noblest pleasures. Our condition is at all times in the hands of God, and all the circumstances of our being are under his direction. And we are sure that his hand, which is open to satisfy the desire of every living thing, and to crown us with loving kindness and tender mercies, can never be lifted up for our hurt. When it strikes us with the rod of affliction, and we are ready to adopt the complaint of *Job*; "The hand of God hath touched me," we have still reason to conclude that it is upon us for good. The pious mind can easily discern a great variety of benefits which the Almighty

S E R M O N V. 115

ty designs to convey unto us through the channel of adversity : and it is far from being the least of these, that, by this means, he trains us up in the exercise of the best affections of our nature, and leads us to the enjoyment of the most substantial pleasures. To be compassionate is, therefore, to conform to the will of our Maker, and to answer one important end of our being.

The exercise of this disposition is, likewise, necessary to gain the esteem and love of our brethren, and to insure unto us their compassion and assistance in the day of trouble. The same calamities which now excite our pity towards others, may, for ought that we can tell, shortly become our own portion. So variable, uncertain and chequered is the condition of human nature, that no man can reasonably hope for an entire exemption

116 S E R M O N V.

emption from trouble ; that every man, however prosperous and happy he may be at present, ought to expect, some time or other, to meet with his share of affliction, and, in his turn, to stand in need of compassion and comfort. But how can we expect to receive that kindness from others, which we have neglected to exercise ourselves? or, if we have overlooked and despised the poor and afflicted, in the day of our prosperity, what security can we have, that we ourselves shall not be overlooked and despised, in the time of adversity? Such is the natural consequence of a selfish unfeeling disposition ; such the punishment which inhumanity often brings upon itself in this world. Whereas, the humane and compassionate are continually laying up a store of esteem and gratitude in the hearts of others, from which they may hope to derive relief and comfort, if affliction

S E R M O N V. 117

tion and poverty should come upon them. "He that deviseth liberal things, "by liberal things shall he stand." The advice of *Solomon*, on this head, may therefore be considered as an excellent lesson of prudence; "Cast thy "bread upon the waters, and thou "shalt find it again after many days."

Finally, to shew compassion to such as are in distress is the way to qualify ourselves for the divine acceptance, at that great day, when "the secrets of "all hearts shall be made manifest, "and when God will render to every "man according to his works." The holy scriptures teach us, that "the "merciful shall obtain mercy;" and that the final state of men, will be, in a great measure, determined by the dispositions which they have discovered, in this respect, whilst on earth. Those who have fed the hungry, relieved the stranger, clothed the naked,

ked, and visited the sick, are instructed by the gospel of Christ to expect, that they shall hereafter “inherit the “kingdom prepared for them, from “the foundation of the world.”

Compassion to such as are in distress is, then, a duty which is enjoined upon us, by the frame and constitution of our nature, by the connections and obligations of social life, and by the authority and command of God.

And let us always remember, that to be compassionate is not merely to feel and cherish the emotions of pity in our hearts, but to embrace every opportunity of expressing them by our actions. No man can really deserve to be styled humane, or can partake of the pleasures and rewards of humanity, who doth not exert his utmost abilities for the relief of such as are in affliction.

affliction. Where the heart melts in sympathy towards the distressed, and the eye weeps with those who weep, the hand will naturally be ready to every good work. A compassionate temper will, indeed, lead us to extend our good wishes and prayers much farther than our actual assistance can reach. The good man pities every unhappy creature which he beholds, and grieves if he but hears a tale of woe, even when it is impossible for him to render any service to the object of his compassion. But pity will always incline us to employ our utmost efforts in redressing the calamities of our brethren, and to “do good unto all men as we have opportunity.”

With respect to the proportion of his possessions which every man should devote to the purposes of charity, no particular rules can be prescribed. It is evident, indeed, that acts of liberality

rality ought not to interfere with the demands of justice. No man hath a right to lavish away the property of another, even upon the poor and needy. This would be to cloath injustice and dishonesty in the drefs of beneficence and charity. Nor ought any man to apply so large a share of his wealth to charitable uses, as will injure his relatives and dependents, and deprive them of a comfortable support, agreeable to their station and rank in life. But when all reasonable allowances are made for these things, a man who conducts his affairs with frugality and discretion, may always find something to spare, for the relief of the poor and afflicted. And those who know the inexpressible pleasure of satisfying the hungry, cloathing the naked, and changing the dejected and sorrowful countenance into joy and gladness, will chearfully forgo a part of that splendor and state, which their fortunes

tunes

tunes might enable them to support, and deny themselves some of the lesser gratifications of life, that they may enlarge their opportunity and capacity of doing good.

Benevolence itself should, indeed, lead us to use great caution in our choice of objects on whom to exercise our liberality; that the small portion of our substance, which we are able to devote to this excellent purpose, may be applied in the most useful manner. It is much to be lamented that, for want of proper precaution on this head, impudence and clamour should sometimes extort, from the hand of charity, that relief, which is due to silent distress and modest merit; and that those alms should sometimes be wasted on the indolent and undeserving, which might have been employed to alleviate real affliction, to satisfy pressing indigence, and to encourage

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courage honest industry. It was greatly to the honour of *Job*, that “ the
“ cause which he knew not he search-
“ ed out.”

If, therefore, you desire to do all the good which your circumstances will allow, seek out the modest and deserving poor, who are incapacitated for labour by sickness or age, or who have met with unexpected misfortunes and disappointments in life. And, having found such real objects of charity, distribute your alms among them, with that freedom, generosity, and cheerfulness of spirit, which will render you like unto the great Father of mankind, who “ giveth unto all men liberally, and daily loadeth us with
“ his benefits :” for “ the Lord loveth
“ a cheerful giver.”

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

ON SUBMISSION TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

*Permites ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque fit utile nostris.*

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S E R M O N VI.

MATTHEW VI. 10.

*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in
heaven.*

THIS is the natural language of genuine piety, and the most becoming address which a creature can possibly present to its maker. It strongly expresses that humility, which is the proper temper of dependent, ignorant, and feeble mortals, and that chearful reliance on the Supreme Being, for which his perfections and providence lay such a sure foundation. When we

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make use of these words in our prayers, we declare our cordial submission to the appointments of the Almighty; we acknowledge ourselves satisfied and happy in the persuasion, that all his designs, with respect to ourselves and the whole creation, will be compleatly accomplished; we express our full and hearty consent, that the power, which presides over the universe without controul, should direct all the affairs of this world; and that he who “ruleth in the armies of heaven, “should likewise rule among the inhabitants of the earth;” we profess our earnest desire that all mankind may submit to the will of God, with the same chearfulness and alacrity with superior beings, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Now what sentiments could we more properly admit into our devotions, than such as these? Do they not naturally arise from an acquaintance with ourselves,
and

and with the great object of our worship?

We are, alas! very imperfect judges of our own interests. Viewing objects through the false medium of prejudice and passion, we learn to call evil good, and good evil. Those things which glitter in our imagination, please our taste, and gratify our humour, we impatiently covet; without considering whether they will be, on the whole, good for us. Whatever approacheth us in the formidable dress of pain and trouble, we instantly dread, and hasten to shun; without examining whether it may not be attended with profit and advantage. If our wishes and hopes be frustrated, or if we be obliged to pass through scenes of affliction and sorrow, we are apt to fret and murmur, and to think our condition hard. Whereas, our own experience often convinceth us, that
we

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we have been mistaken in our judgment concerning these things ; and we afterwards see, and are obliged to confess, that it would have been for our disadvantage, to have been indulged in the enjoyment of those things which we most earnestly desired, or to have been exempted from those trials which we most of all dreaded. It is therefore our unspeakable felicity, that the condition of our being is not under our own direction. And that humility, which a just sense of our weakness and ignorance will always inspire, must naturally preserve us from leaning to our own understandings ; lead us to rejoice that our concerns are in much better hands than our own ; and dispose us, while we faithfully perform the duties of life, chearfully to commit ourselves to the care of a being of unerring wisdom and perfect goodness.

Resigna-

S E R M O N VI. 129

Resignation to the divine will likewise appears to be our wisdom and duty, from considering the nature, perfections, and character of the Being, to whose disposal we are required to submit ourselves, and all our interests. It is the almighty and wise creator and preserver of all things, who is continually performing wonders of power and wisdom before our eyes, in the support and preservation of ourselves, and every creature around us; who guideth the stars in their courses, and maintaineth the harmony and beauty of the whole material creation; who is equal to the formation and direction of the vast system of the universe: It is the gracious father of all, who hath called innumerable creatures into life, that they might partake of his bounty; who hath endued them with various capacities for enjoyment; who is continually spreading a plentiful table before

fore the several parts of his family, for their support and entertainment; who “openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of every living thing;” and who manifestly makes the happiness of his creatures the end of all his dispensations: This greatest and best of beings, is the object of our humble confidence; it is to him that we are to resign ourselves; and in his appointments we are, at all times, to acquiesce.

If we survey the magnificence and variety of his works, we cannot doubt whether he is able to make us happy: and if we observe how uniformly all his operations tend to the good of his creatures, we shall have as little reason to question whether he is disposed to do it. The proofs of a wise and gracious design, which are to be met with in the constitution of human nature, in the frame of every creature
around

around us, and in the general order of providence, are innumerable. Even with regard to those events, which, at first view, seem to deviate from the plan of goodness, we can clearly discover, upon more accurate examination, that many of them are so far from being defects, that they are beautiful and important parts of the general system.

Having such convincing proofs that unerring wisdom and perfect goodness preside over the world, why then should we be such enemies to our own peace, as to entertain a doubt, whether whatever is, is right, or whether all things shall work together for good? Why should we make those events, the reason and tendency of which we cannot fully explain an objection against a truth, of which we have such clear and satisfying proofs? Rather, let us impute every difficulty of this
kind

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kind to our own ignorance, and make ourselves happy in the persuasion, that “ the Lord is good to all, and that “ his tender mercies are over all his “ works.” Let us follow this delightful truth into all its practical consequences. Being firmly persuaded, that all things are ordered by that wisdom which cannot err, and by that goodness which is perfect and everlasting, let us cast all our care upon the Almighty, and let us, in all our devout addresses unto him, say, with unreserved acquiescence and chearful satisfaction, “ Thy will be done.” Let the sentiments of our hearts, at all times, be such as these :

“ It is the support and consolation
 “ of my soul, that “ the Lord God
 “ omnipotent reigneth ;” for I am fully convinced, from the general constitution of the world, and from my own daily experience, that he is
 “ the

S E R M O N VI. 133

“ the Lord God merciful and graci-
 “ ous.” The plan of the divine go-
 “ vernment is, indeed, an object infi-
 “ nitely too extensive for my narrow
 “ intellects to comprehend. It hath
 “ difficulties in it, which I cannot re-
 “ move ; mysteries which it is not in
 “ my power to unfold. But, that an
 “ insect should not be able to compre-
 “ hend the designs of a skilful archi-
 “ tect, or follow the genius of a *New-*
 “ *ton* into all the depths of philosophy,
 “ cannot be thought surprising. In-
 “ stead, therefore, of arrogantly pre-
 “ tending to explain the laws by which
 “ the God of nature acts ; I will think
 “ myself happy in the visible proofs
 “ which I have, that there is a su-
 “ preme power in the universe, which
 “ directs all things for the best ; and
 “ where the line of human under-
 “ standing is too short to fathom the
 “ depths of infinitewisdom, I will learn
 “ patiently to submit, and devoutly to
 N “ adore.

“adore. I look upon myself as a being
 “comparatively of little consequence
 “in the creation ; but I will not ima-
 “gine that I am so inconsiderable as to
 “be beneath the notice of my maker,
 “or, in the language of despondency,
 “say, “ Shall any remember *me* from
 “above? I shall not be remem-
 “bered among so many people ; for
 “what is my soul among such an in-
 “finite number of creatures ?” He
 “who hath determined the bounds of
 “my habitation, and all the circumstan-
 “ces of my being, will, doubtless,
 “grant me that portion of happiness
 “which will, on the whole, be right. In
 “his appointments, therefore, I cheer-
 “fully acquiesce. Instead of spending
 “my days in useless and ungrateful
 “complainings, I will act the part
 “which heaven hath assigned me,
 “with alacrity ; I will patiently sub-
 “mit to the inconveniencies which
 “necessarily attend my condition,
 “knowing even these to be appointed
 “by

“ by him who alone is wise and good ;
 “ I will prudently make the most of
 “ the comforts and pleasures which
 “ my station affords me ; and, without
 “ lamenting what is past, or fearing
 “ what is to come, will enjoy the pre-
 “ sent hour, with a thankful and
 “ chearful heart. It shall be my con-
 “ stant care to be as virtuous, and as
 “ happy, as my circumstances will
 “ permit ; and, for the rest, I will
 “ chearfully leave it to him, who is
 “ infinitely better able to judge what
 “ is right and good than myself ; and
 “ will, at all times, say, with the full
 “ consent of my heart, “ The will of
 “ the Lord be done.”

Every good man must be convinced
 of the propriety of these sentiments,
 and will adopt this language as his
 own. But to support these senti-
 ments under all the changes and trou-
 bles of life ; to be able chearfully to

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adopt this language, when we are tormented with pain and sickness; dejected by misfortunes and disappointments; oppressed by the injustice and cruelty of enemies; afflicted by the unkindness and treachery of false friends; mourning under the loss of those we love; or alarmed by the sudden and unexpected approach of death; this is a difficult, this is indeed a laborious task. Let us, however, examine whether it be not possible for us, by the aids of a rational, sincere, and fervent piety, even in circumstances like these, patiently and cheerfully to acquiesce in the appointments of providence.

We once, perhaps, flattered ourselves with the hope, that we should acquire large possessions, and fill up some exalted station in life; and are now awakened out of our dream of wealth and greatness, and find ourselves

selves obliged to sit down contented in the humble sphere, in which providence hath placed us. Our case is, it may be, still more lamentable; we are reduced by misfortune or injustice, to contracted and embarrassed circumstances, from which our birth and education had given us reason to hope that we should have been exempted; and even our moderate and reasonable expectations are frustrated. In the present uncertain and fluctuating state of human affairs, disappointments like these are far from being unusual.

But are not our fortune and condition appointed by the wise and merciful Father of all? Is it not the same hand which at first formed us, and hath continually "loaded us with," "benefits," which now cuts off our fond wishes, and fixes our habitation in the vale of adversity? We see, and acknowledge, that the divine con-

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duct towards us, in other instances, hath proceeded from disinterested benevolence, and been guided by perfect wisdom. Why then should we entertain a suspicion, whether the Almighty be influenced by the same benevolence, and directed by the same wisdom still, even in those appointments of his providence, which are least suited to our present inclinations? Is he not as well able to discern our true interests, and as much disposed to promote them, when he frustrates our desires, as when he grants them the most unbounded indulgence? Ought we not then to conclude that, when, with regard to us, “his paths” “are in the deep, and his footsteps in “the mighty waters,” trackless and unsearchable, they are still tending towards the same gracious ends, our personal improvement and happiness, and the general good of the creation?

Besides,

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Besides, if we view our condition with the eye of reason, unclouded by the mists of ambition and avarice, cannot we ourselves discover many advantages which may arise from disappointment and poverty? May not the difficulties which we meet with in life, serve to render us more diligent and active in performing the duties of our station, and consequently more useful in the world? May they not be of use to correct our false notions of human happiness; to restrain our unreasonable expectations from external possessions; and to lead us to seek for peace and satisfaction, where alone they can be found, in the cultivation of our minds, in uprightness of intention, goodness of heart, and purity of manners? Do they not tend to preserve us from an undue attachment to the present world, and to turn our thoughts and desires towards that being, with whom is the fountain

fountain of life, and towards that state, in which the righteous shall be happy, without the fear of interruption, disappointment, or period? Ought we not, then, to meet the vicissitudes of life with equanimity and composure, and to submit to the greatest reverse of fortune, with a chearful acquiescence in the divine will, adopting the language of the prophet *Habakkuk*; “Although the fig-tree shall
 “not blossom, neither shall fruit be on
 “the vine, though the field shall yield
 “no meat, the flock shall be cut off
 “from the fold, and there shall be no
 “herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in
 “the Lord, and joy in the God of my
 “salvation.”

It is, perhaps, our misfortune to have suffered by the malice, dishonesty, or caprice of those around us. The vices of men are by far the most fruitful source of their miseries. And,
 if

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if we have the wisdom and virtue to preserve our own minds untainted, we must not expect to pass through a world, in which iniquity so much abounds, without sometimes meeting with injurious treatment, from the corrupt passions, and vicious practices of others. Designing men, who are void of every principle but that of self-love, will often lie in wait to deceive and betray the innocent and unsuspecting, and to build their own prosperity on the ruins of their neighbour's. The arrows of envy, malice and calumny are continually flying around us on every side; we must not then wonder, if they sometimes meet us in our way, and give us a painful wound. Nay, such is the fickleness of the human heart, that even our most intimate acquaintance, and dearest friends, may prove our greatest foes; and we may receive unkind and cruel treatment —

from

from the quarter where we least expected, and are least prepared to meet it—from the hands of those we love. We may possibly have occasion to adopt the bitter lamentation of *David*; “Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me.”

But even those perverse and malignant passions, which render men the most unhappy in themselves, and the greatest enemies to others, are, for wise ends, permitted in that constitution, which is under the conduct of the greatest and best of all beings. He suffers the vicious, for a while, to prosper in the world, and even to insult and afflict the righteous, that he may from hence educe the most perfect virtue, and consummate felicity. Even at present, he over-rules the follies and vices of men to the general good; hereby, teaching the wicked,
from

from their own experience—the most convincing of all instructors — that virtue is the only path to happiness, and giving the good a fuller conviction of the advantages, and a higher relish for the pleasures, of goodness. And we are taught to hope, that the Almighty will hereafter make a complete and everlasting distinction between the righteous and wicked; and that the present state is only an introduction to another, from which vice shall be eternally excluded, and where virtue, peace, and joy, will for ever reign and triumph. Whatever we may at present suffer from the vices of men, we ought therefore to look, beyond the immediate causes of our calamities, to that being, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and to say, with unfeigned resignation, “Thy will be done.”

Another

Another affliction, which we may be called to bear, and which to some minds is, perhaps, of all others, the most painful to be endured, is the loss of dear and valuable friends by death. To attend the dying bed of a fellow-creature, and to follow his remains to the silent habitations of the dead, is always a solemn and affecting scene. But, when our hearts have been long united to a friend, by all the endearments of mutual affection, and a continual interchange of kind offices; when we have been long accustomed to seek from him, counsel in difficulties, consolation in trouble, and entertainment in the hour of cheerfulness; when our souls have been, as it were, bound up in the soul of our friend; to behold him losing for ever all power to comfort, assist, or delight us more; to see those eyes, which had so long beheld us with the tenderest affection, and those
lips,

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lips, which had so often ministered consolation and joy to our hearts, closed in death; to commit his lifeless remains to the grave, and there bid him a last farewell; is painful and hard indeed. No wonder that at such a season we are ready to complain, in the anguish of our souls; "Lord, " why hast thou made all men in vain? " Wherefore was this treasure put " into our hands, to be so soon torn " from us for ever?"

But, let not the tumult of our passions tempt us to arraign the ways of heaven, or render us deaf to the sober dictates of reason and religion. We hold every other comfort of life, by the same uncertain tenure, by which we possess our friends. If therefore we think the space allotted us for the enjoyment of them too short, we may with equal reason complain of the shortness of our present state of be-
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ing, and, because we are not permitted to live always, cast away life itself, with all its blessings, as not worthy of our acceptance. If any thing in our present condition deserves our thanks, it is the happiness which we enjoy in social life. Now, though one friend be removed from us, there are others left behind, with whom we may enjoy a great if not an equal degree of happiness. And, besides this, we are not left without hope of meeting them again, in another and happier state, where they shall be separated from us no more. When, therefore, the time which infinite wisdom hath appointed for their departure cometh, instead of murmuring because the course of nature is not changed on our account, and complaining that our friends do not live for ever, we ought to be thankful for the happiness which we have enjoyed with them, and to say, with chearful submission to divine providence,

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vidence, "The Lord gave, and the
"Lord hath taken away; blessed be
"the name of the Lord."

Let us, in the last place, suppose a good man oppressed with bodily pain and affliction, and in expectation of a speedy dissolution. While he is tormented with grievous anguish, or pining under some lingering disease; when all the amusements and pleasures of life are passed by, never to be recalled; while he stands upon the borders of the grave, and expects shortly to "go the way from whence he shall not return," and to enter upon a state of being hitherto untried and unknown; in this situation, religion can do more to support him, than all the skill of physicians, or all the affection of friends. It can sooth his pains; it can banish his fears; it can transform the king of terrors into a messenger of peace; it can inspire his de-

parting spirit with a hope full of im-
 mortality. Such is the mighty power
 of religion, that it can enable him,
 even at this season, to say: "The
 "cup which my Father hath given
 "me, shall I not drink it? What
 "though it be full of bitterness, it is
 "mingled by the same hand which hath
 "so often ministered to me the richest
 "draughts of pleasure, and made my
 "cup to run over with blessings: I
 "will not therefore entertain a doubt,
 "but that it is in faithfulness and
 "mercy that I am afflicted. I will
 "submit with cheerfulness to my pre-
 "sent afflictions, from a full persua-
 "sion, that they are designed to exer-
 "cise and establish my virtue, and to
 "prepare me for "a far more ex-
 "ceeding and eternal weight of glo-
 "ry." "Yea, though I walk through
 "the valley of the shadow of death, I
 "will fear no evil." "Wherever I go,
 "I shall be under the care of my Al-
 "mighty

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“mighty Maker; whatever I am, I
 “shall be such as his wisdom and
 “goodness appoints. Hitherto he hath
 “been my father and my friend. Why
 “then should I fear that he will for-
 “sake me in the time of my greatest
 “need? Into thy hands, O God of
 “mercy, I cheerfully commend my
 “spirit: behold thy servant, do with me
 “what seemeth thee good; conduct
 “me whithersoever thou wilt; bestow
 “upon me whatsoever thou pleatest;
 “I will, at all times, acquiesce in
 “thine appointments, and confide in
 “thy goodness; and while I have any
 “being I will say, Thy will be done.”

In life and in death, may these pi-
 ous sentiments be ours, and to this
 language may we all say, Amen!

S E R M O N VII.

THE DANGER OF CHOOSING
VICIOUS COMPANIONS.

Decipit Exemplar.

H O R.

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THE DANGER OF CROSSING
VICIOUS COMPANIONS

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S E R M O N VII.

1 CORINTHIANS. xv. 33.

*Be not deceived; evil communications
corrupt good manners.*

THIS is a caution which hath often been repeated in the ears of youth by their virtuous parents and friends, and which there is still, alas! too much occasion to renew. The young, the gay, and the inconsiderate, can never be too frequently reminded of the hazard which they must run, if they choose persons of vicious dispositions, and corrupt manners, for
their

their intimate associates, and familiar friends. With a view, therefore, to guard them against this destructive snare, I shall, in this discourse, endeavour to convince them, that it is scarcely possible for a man to make choice of such companions, without becoming a partaker of their vices, and of all the fatal consequences which attend them; or, in the language of the text, that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” The truth of this observation will be manifest, if we consider the influence which a desire of imitation, and a fear of offending naturally have upon the minds of youth; if we observe the strength of vicious habits; or, in the last place, if we appeal to facts.

The propensity to imitation, by which all mankind are in some degree governed, is more especially concerned in forming the tempers and manners

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ners of young persons. Their imperfect acquaintance with the nature of things and the customs of the world, and their disposition to place confidence in all those who have gained their affection, at once plainly prove, and fully account for the powerful influence of this principle upon their minds. They cannot, therefore, associate with persons of licentious characters, without being in continual danger of taking the infection of their vices.

And this danger is greatly increased, by a certain pliability of temper, and fear of giving offence, which, amiable as it may in some views appear, is perhaps one of the most destructive snares to which youth are exposed. We may appeal to their experience, whether they have not often done those things, which they have in their hearts disapproved, or neglected the performance

performance of good actions to which they have been strongly inclined, through fear of being ridiculed and reproached by their companions and friends; whether a desire of complying with the humours, and conforming to the manners of others hath not frequently betrayed them into practices directly contrary to the serious judgment, and even the present inclination, of their own minds.

There is indeed a timidity and cowardice in this conduct, which is highly deserving of censure. For, why do we boast of our reasonable nature, if, with all the weakness, though without the innocence of sheep, we follow wherever the first leader points the way? Doth it become creatures capable of consideration and reflection, to lay aside their reason and conscience in the conduct of life, and give themselves up to be governed by the false taste

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taste and caprice of others? It may perhaps be said, in excuse for this species of folly, that we often see the rich and great, those with whom we are connected, and on whom we have considerable dependence, and even our most intimate associates and dearest friends, on whose affection and esteem we place the highest value, allowing themselves in irregular and vicious practices; and that to resist temptations like these requires uncommon resolution and fortitude. And it is granted, that these are difficulties which frequently occur in life; and that the man who is inflexible to ill, and resolutely good, may sometimes offend those whom he could wish to please. But suppose the worst imaginable consequences; suppose that your vicious acquaintance will exclude you from their society and friendship; can you not find others, whose wisdom and goodness will render them much

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more safe, agreeable, and useful companions? And if, by resolutely refusing to follow them in their vicious excesses, you should lose any worldly advantage, will you not be amply recompensed, by enjoying the peaceful reflections of your own minds, and the approbation of your wife and virtuous friends? It is, however, far from being certain, that this conduct will deprive you, either of the good opinion, or the friendly assistance, of those who are the greatest libertines in practice. If any man expects to gain their esteem, by complying with their solicitations, he will find himself greatly deceived. For, when they have prevailed upon you to forsake the path of virtue, and pass with them through all the scenes of intemperance and iniquity, they will triumph over their unhappy victim, boast of their conquest, and expose your weakness to the world. Whereas, if you steadfastly resist

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resist their importunity, and hold fast your integrity, though you may suffer the derision of their tongues, you will be secure of the secret approbation of their hearts. And they will often be so honest to themselves, and to the virtuous character, as to applaud and vindicate it, though at the same time they condemn their own.

This complying temper is then a culpable weakness; and the advice of the wise son of *Sirach*, with regard to it, deserves our serious consideration: “Be not ashamed when it
 “concerneth thy soul; for there is a
 “shame which bringeth sin, and there is
 “a shame which is glory and grace. Ac-
 “cept no man’s person against thy
 “soul, and let not the reverence of
 “any man cause thee to fall.” This is however a weakness, to which young persons are peculiarly subject, and which is one principal ground of the

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danger

danger to which they expose themselves, when they venture to associate with persons of immoral and licentious characters. It is because “the fear of man bringeth a snare,” that we so frequently see the observation of the text verified: “Evil communications corrupt good manners.”

This observation may be farther illustrated, by considering the power of evil habits. When men first venture among vicious companions, they generally determine to be upon their guard, and to follow them only so far as prudence and virtue will permit; and imagine that they shall be able to leave them, whenever they see occasion.—The grossest and most fatal delusion in the world! Where is the man who can say, that he hath chosen the licentious and prophane for his familiar associates, and hath preserved his good principles unshaken, his morals

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rals untainted? If a man cannot re-
 frain from joining himself to their so-
 ciety, how should he have resolution
 to abstain from following their exam-
 ple? Or if he once suffer himself to
 be led astray by them, what probabi-
 lity is there, that he will be able to
 force his retreat through all the oppo-
 sition of ridicule and contempt; to re-
 strain his inflamed passions; to con-
 quer his growing evil habits, and to
 return to the paths of honour and
 virtue? After having been long inured
 to vicious irregularities, is it likely
 that he should be willing to submit his
 actions to be governed by the rules of
 virtue?

Experience proves, that long habits
 of vice pervert the judgment, and vi-
 tiate the taste; and that the human
 mind may possibly be so blinded by
 corrupt affections, as to call evil good,
 and good evil, and may become so en-
 flaved to vice, as (figuratively speak-

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ing) to be as incapable of reformation, as “ the Ethiopian of changing “ his skin, or the Leopard his spots.”

A man of the nicest sense of honour and virtue, who would shudder at the thought of being guilty of the vices which he sees practised in the world, may gradually lose the good impressions of education, and his most delicate moral feelings, and may sink into the depths of wickedness. And there is nothing, which is so likely to produce these unhappy effects, as evil company. If by any means a man becomes, for a time, a companion of persons of licentious principles and manners ; especially if they be of the same age and rank with himself ; if they be free, generous and good-natured ; if they be possessed of an easy and insinuating address, and appear influenced by friendship and respect ; what will be the consequence ? He will have

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have frequent and powerful temptations to vice cast in his way ; he will see it represented in a pleasing light, and by degrees, begin to think favourably concerning it ; he will then, probably, be persuaded to make some faint and irresolute advances towards the path of folly ; with faltering, trembling, and half retracted steps, he will enter the forbidden way : he will not be able, at first, to proceed, without a thousand struggles ; the inward reproaches of his mind will spread a thousand virtuous blushes over his face : but by continuing to associate with men of bad character, the best principles of his soul will gradually lose their power ; he will daily become less sensible of the deformity and danger of vice ; 'till at length, by repeated acts of wickedness, his scruples will vanish ; his fears will be dissipated ; his heart will be hardened ; and he will proceed from one vice to another,

ther, till he arrives at a dreadful pre-eminence in wickedness. Thus do evil communications most certainly and fatally corrupt good manners!

In the last place, the truth of this observation is evident from facts. Which of us cannot recollect instances, within the circle of our own acquaintance, of persons who have been deluded, corrupted, ruined, by the choice of licentious and vicious companions? Perhaps some of us have seen those, who were dear to us, in early life, on account of their modesty, diligence, piety, sincerity, and friendship; with whom we hoped long to have enjoyed the pleasures of a virtuous intimacy; who have been unexpectedly caught in this destructive snare. Perhaps, we have seen their native innocence changed into licentiousness; their piety into prophaneness; and their diligence into idle extravagance:

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gance: they have treated our friendship with contempt and derision; and we have been obliged, for our own safety and reputation, to forsake their society. How many distressed parents may be found, who are weeping over a disobedient and profligate child, and, with grief, ascribing his ruin to evil company! There was a time when his amiable dispositions were the joy of their hearts, and when they looked forward with a pleasing hope, to the season when he should be the comfort of their advanced age. The constancy and pleasure with which he then attended upon religious institutions; the tenderness and compassion with which he beheld objects of distress, and the chearfulness with which he relieved them; the readiness with which he performed every office of filial duty; the care and diligence with which he treasured up useful stores of knowledge, and maxims of prudence; and

and the generous openness, manly thoughtfulness, and innocent cheerfulness which he discovered, then gave them inexpressible satisfaction, and filled them with the most flattering expectations. But he enters the world, unsuspecting, incautious, confident. He mingles, before he is aware, with young persons of licentious manners, and, without being apprehensive of danger, follows wherever they lead him. “He goeth (as *Solomon* expresseth it) like an ox to the slaughter, “and as a bird hasteth to the snare, “and knoweth not that it is for his “life.” By degrees, the pious and affectionate instructions and admonitions of his parents and friends are forgotten; the good impressions of his education are effaced; and he sinks into a course of licentiousness, and a state of insensibility. His parents observe and lament his degeneracy, with unavailing and, perhaps, despised tears; they

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they see their unwearied labours lost, their tender affection slighted, and their pleasing hopes blasted ; and they go down with sorrow to the grave. Such are the fatal effects of evil company. Look abroad into the world : observe some whose constitutions are impaired by intemperance and debauchery ; others whose circumstances are so embarrassed, that they know not what course to take ; others who are obliged to submit to the confinement of a prison, as a punishment for their irregularities ; and others chained in dungeons, just ready to receive, from the hand of justice, the desert of their crimes. Ask all these, what was the first step towards their present unhappy state ; it is probable that most of them will tell you—bad company.

What further arguments do we need to evince the truth of the Apostle's observation, “ Evil communications corrupt

corrupt good manners?" Or, how can I more properly address you, in the conclusion of this discourse, than in the words with which this observation is introduced; "Be not deceived."

Perhaps those who wish to seduce you from the path of virtue, and to make you partners in their wickedness, may for a time assume the air of sobriety and friendship. They may be careful, at first, not to shock your sensibility; and may, perhaps, discover, in your presence, little more than that innocent cheerfulness, to which you have been accustomed. They may profess the highest respect for you, and only desire to shew their friendship, by conducting you to a few innocent pleasures, from which the unnecessary restraints of education have debarred you. But be not deceived; for (to allude to the figurative language of
our

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our favour) “ though they come to
 “ you in sheep’s cloathing, inwardly
 “ they are ravening wolves.” How-
 ever fairly they may address you ; in
 whatever pleasing disguise they may
 appear ; be assured their design is to
 rob you of your character, your in-
 nocence, and your peace. “ If sin-
 “ ners, then, entice you, consent not:
 “ walk not in the way with them ;
 “ refrain your feet from their paths ;
 “ neither desire to be with them, lest
 “ ye learn their ways, and get a snare
 “ to your souls. Enter not into the
 “ path of the wicked, and go not in
 “ the way of evil men ; avoid it, pass
 “ not by it, turn from it, and pass
 “ away.”

Be not deceived by the vain imagi-
 nation, that you shall be able to asso-
 ciate with such persons, and still re-
 tain your integrity. This is an ima-
 gination, by which thousands have

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been

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been lulled into security, and betrayed into vice and ruin. Trust not your virtue, I beseech you, on so precarious a foundation. If the innocent man, with all the advantages of a religious education and good habits, finds it difficult to resist the numerous and powerful temptations, which necessarily surround him; think what must be the condition of him who, not content with the trials of his virtue, which unavoidably fall in his way, placeth himself in the midst of new difficulties, and, with the highest presumption, meets temptations which he might easily have avoided. “Can a man take fire
“in his bosom and not be burnt?” Do you imagine it possible to be the constant companions of men of corrupt morals; to expose yourselves to their artful insinuations, the influence of their example, and the force of their wit and raillery; with all the natural ardour of youth, to place yourselves in the way of those allurements, by
which

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which thousands have been undone ; and still retain your purity and innocence ? If integrity and virtue were things of little consequence, I would bid you, for once, try the experiment. But reputation and honour, uprightness and purity, a peaceful conscience, and everlasting happiness, are too important to be trifled with : and there is little reason to renew an experiment, which thousands have already made to their cost. Let it then suffice, that you have seen the fatal effects of evil company in others. Presume not to venture yourselves in the way of that infection, by which such multitudes have been destroyed. If you value the esteem of the wise and good around you ; if you desire to preserve the affection, and not to destroy the peace of your virtuous friends ; if you would not give up every valuable interest, both in this world, and that which is to come ; “ have no fellow-

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“ ship

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“ ship with the unfruitful works of
 “ darkness,” but say concerning all
 the workers of iniquity, “ O my soul,
 “ come not thou into their secret ; un-
 “ to their assembly, mine honour, be
 “ not thou united.”

In the choice of your intimate companions and friends, exercise great caution and prudence. Let them be possessed of a good understanding and a love of knowledge ; that you may always find instruction and improvement in their conversation. Let them be persons of a thoughtful and considerate turn of mind ; that they may be able to advise, admonish, and reprove you, as occasion may require. Let them be endued with a natural generosity of temper, and sensibility of heart ; that their attachment to you may be sincere, disinterested, and inviolable. And, above all, let their morals be uncorrupted, and their characters

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racters unblemished ; that their example, instead of betraying you into vice, may encourage and assist your progress in the path of virtue. Seek for persons who are possessed of such qualifications as these ; and having found, tried, and approved them, make them the friends of your heart ; delight in their conversation ; place confidence in their integrity ; and secure their affection by all the kind offices in your power : for, remember, “ He that walketh with wise men “ shall be wise ; but a companion of “ fools shall be destroyed.”

S E R M O N V I I I .

T H E D U T Y O F T H E R I C H .

----- *Deorum*
Muneribus sapienter uti -----

H O R .

THE RICH

THE DUTY OF THE RICH

—LAW—

—MORALITY—

THE

S E R M O N VIII.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 12.

I know how to abound.

HAPPY indeed was the Apostle, who could, with truth, make this declaration concerning himself! For the honour of christianity, for the sake of mankind, it were to be wished, that all who abound could adopt the same language. We should not then see those who profess to learn of him that was meek and lowly of heart, and to set their affections on things above, looking down upon their poorer

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er brethren with insolence and disdain, and boasting themselves in the abundance of their riches, as if they hoped to live for ever, and not see corruption: We should not then see the bounties of providence, which are given us for our pleasure and advantage, wasted, abused, trampled under foot, by riot, intemperance, and debauchery: We should not then see hunger and distress waiting at the door of plenty, and, at last, sent away without so much as partaking of the crumbs which fall from the table; honest industry groaning under the grievous burden of oppression; and humble modest merit buried in obscurity, without reward, without encouragement, without support. Such scenes as these would no longer afflict our sight, if the happy art, which christianity teacheth, and which its great Apostle had learned, were universally studied and practised; if all whom
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heaven hath blessed with riches “knew
“how to abound.”

There are, perhaps, few who have modesty and humility enough to think themselves unacquainted with this art, or to suspect, that, if they were advanced to a more conspicuous and affluent station, they should not be able to appear in it with dignity, and to discharge the duties of it with reputation and success. We shall, I believe, seldom find a person who would not be willing to have his virtue put to this trial, or who would enter upon it with any great degree of diffidence.

It is, however, far from being so easy a matter as may generally be supposed, to preserve our innocence amidst the snares of prosperity, and to answer all the demands which honour, benevolence, virtue, and religion will have upon us, in an exalted sphere of
life.

life. Our Saviour hath given us a most striking representation of the difficulties which attend a state of ease and abundance, and instructed us to exercise the utmost caution and diligence in such circumstances, by saying; "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Those therefore who, through the good providence of God, not only have a sufficiency for the support of life, but are able to command many of its conveniences and elegancies, and who, according to their rank in life, whatever it may be, live in plenty (for all such may properly be said to abound) will suffer me to put them in remembrance of the manner in which they ought to behave, in the midst of their abundance.

And

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And, in the first place, those who “know how to abound,” will not suffer the increase of their wealth to fill them with pride and self-sufficiency, “nor think of themselves more highly than they ought to think.” It is a mark of a little and weak mind, for a man to be elevated above measure on the advancement of his fortune; as if all real merit consisted in an abundance of gold and silver; or, as if success in business were a certain proof of the peculiar approbation and favour of heaven. A wise man knows, and a good man feels, that, how much soever he may be caressed, fawned upon, and flattered by his dependents; how greatly soever the splendor of dress, equipage, and external shew, may dazzle the eyes of the multitude, and render him the object of their admiration and applause; he hath no real merit, but that which is seated in his heart, and which would remain

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unimpaired, if he were stripped of all his pomp, and cloathed in rags: that with the discerning few, in his own impartial reflections, and before the righteous judge of men, all the disguises of wealth and greatness, are “less than nothing and vanity.” He sees that with regard to the honours and treasures of the world, “all things happen alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and the wicked.” If therefore “he is made rich, and the glory of his house is increased,” he is not “vainly puffed up,” imagining himself “to be something, when he is nothing.” He wears all the ornaments of his exalted station with a modest and graceful ease, and crowns them all with the fairest gem which can adorn even royalty itself—humility.

Further, Those who “know how to abound,” will not suffer their
wealth

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wealth to gain too firm an hold upon their affections, or form too high expectations of happiness from it. "When riches increase they will not set their hearts upon them;" They will not say unto the gold, "Thou art my hope," or unto fine gold, "Thou art my confidence." There is nothing of which we have more frequent and convincing proofs, than of the insufficiency of riches to make us happy. We daily see that no worldly possessions can smooth the brow of care, give ease to a pained body, or heal a wounded spirit. We often behold those who have been most earnest, and most successful, in their pursuit after wealth, suddenly deprived of their dearly purchased, and highly valued stores. And we are certain, that however fortunate we may have been in gaining or preserving riches, the day will soon arrive, when we must leave them all

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behind us. It is, therefore, a lesson of wisdom, as well as of piety, “that
 “those who are rich in this world,
 “should not trust in uncertain riches,
 “but in the living God, who giveth
 “us richly all things to enjoy.”

Those who “know how to abound,” will, likewise, be careful to enjoy the bounties of providence with moderation and temperance. The Almighty hath not, indeed, set before us the feast of nature, like the fabled cup of *Tantalus*, to fill us with perpetual desire, without giving us leave to taste of it. He doth not make our table a snare to us, by putting the means of gratification into our hands, only to try our resolution in refraining from the use of them. Our wise and merciful father is incapable of such conduct; and far be it from his offspring to charge him thus foolishly! What ever our maker hath given us we may,
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we ought to enjoy. To taste all the pleasures, which every object, and every creature around us is capable of affording, is to conform to the will of him who bestowed them all.

But let it be remembered, that it is our wisdom and interest, and therefore our duty, not blindly to follow the impulse of appetite and passion, but to employ our reason in directing us to such a use of the good things of life, as shall render them, on the whole, most advantageous to us. An attention to this maxim will soon convince us, that all those excessive animal indulgencies, which tend to injure our health, impair our understandings, destroy our characters, or deprive us of an opportunity of using our possessions for the benefit of others, are foolish and criminal. And this is equally true with respect to those excesses, which arise from pride,

luxury, and ambition. That undistinguishing and blind respect, which mankind have been accustomed to pay to external appearances, and that desire of being thought of importance in the world, which is natural to the human heart, have often led weak minds to aim at things much above their reach. By endeavouring to make an appearance, which they have neither had fortune nor œconomy to support, they have frequently deprived themselves of those pleasures which they might innocently and prudently have enjoyed, and plunged themselves into inextricable difficulties. Those who indulge this ridiculous and pernicious disposition, are as far from having learned the art of abounding, as those who abuse the bounties of heaven, and waste their substance in riot, drunkenness, and debauchery. But the man who knows how to abound will carefully avoid these errors,

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rors, and will enjoy his abundance, in such a manner as will tend to enliven his spirits, and fit him for the duties and pleasures of social life; will leave him power and inclination to employ a proper portion of his substance in works of charity; and will dispose him more heartily to give thanks to the Author of all good for his mercies. And, by this means, he will at once extract from his possessions the pleasures of sensible indulgence, of social enjoyment, of benevolence and of piety.

Let us, in the next place consider the duties of those who abound, which respect the Supreme Being, “the father of mercies, and the giver of every good gift.”

The sentiment which ought, doubtless, to prevail above all others, in the hearts of those who abound, is religious

gious gratitude. The poorest and most wretched of the sons of men are not without sufficient ground for thankfulness. How reasonable then is it, that those who enjoy not only the necessary supports, but the conveniencies and gratifications of life, in a degree vastly superior to thousands of their fellow creatures, should abound in love and gratitude to the author of all their enjoyments ! The least reflection must convince us, that we have nothing but what we have received ; that if we are distinguished from our brethren, it is God who hath made us to differ ; and that superior enjoyments call for higher degrees of thankfulness, and more joyful songs of praise. If therefore we consider the peculiar motives to gratitude and devotion which arise from a state of affluence, we shall naturally expect the most shining examples of piety, among those who fill up the higher stations of life. And yet, alas !
how

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how numerous are the facts which contradict this expectation! How often do we see, that when men “have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, they forget the God who made them, and lightly esteem the rock of their salvation!” How frequently do those, who have poured out their prayers to the Almighty in the day of distress, forsake him in the time of their prosperity!

If we enquire into the reason why the tribute of religious gratitude, which is so indisputably due, and which the pious mind finds it so natural and easy to pay, to the best of all beings, is so frequently with-held by those from whom it might be first expected; we shall find that pride, presumption, inconsideration, and the cares and pleasures of life, all concur to produce this effect. The temptations to a disregard

regard of the Supreme Being, which attend a state of prosperity, are, indeed, so numerous and powerful, that those who have the resolution and goodness to withstand them and, in this situation, to maintain a becoming sense of the providence and government of God, may justly be said to "know how to abound."

Piety likewise requires, that those who are in affluent circumstances, should consider themselves as entrusted by God with important talents, for which they must give an account, and should act as faithful stewards of the manifold bounties of his providence. It is the wise appointment of heaven, that no man should live to himself, but that all, in their respective stations, should contribute their part towards the public good. Those, therefore, to whom God hath given a large portion of the good things of life, should consider,

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sider, that they are answerable to their Lord, for the trust which he hath reposed in them; and that they can have no reason to expect his approbation, if they appropriate the talents committed to them solely to their own use; if they neglect to exert themselves for the service of their fellow-creatures, in proportion to the capacities and opportunities, which their superior fortune and rank in life afford them. It is a maxim of equity, that to whom much is given, of them much should be required. But the particular improvement, which it may reasonably be expected that those who abound should make of their trust, will more fully appear, by considering their duty, as it respects their fellow-creatures.

Now, those who know how to abound will undoubtedly avoid all haughty, injurious, and oppressive behaviour

haviour towards their inferiors. Pride and ignorance may sometimes lead the rich and great to forget the common relation which subsists between man and man, as they have all one father, and to treat their poorer brethren with disdain and contempt, as if they were beings of an inferior order. Nay their minds may be so totally vitiated and depraved; so entirely divested of every sentiment of humanity and compassion; that they may become capable of increasing those burdens, which nature would have taught them to lessen, and, as far as possible, to remove. But such a temper and behaviour as this is an undoubted proof, either that a man hath risen from a low station of life to wealth and power, which he knows not how to use and enjoy, or that he is under the dominion of those base and selfish passions, which are a disgrace to the exalted rank in which he happens to be born. Those
 who

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who are possessed of true greatness of soul will consider all mankind as by nature upon a level with themselves, and be sensible, that a poor man may have as much real goodness of heart and excellence of character, and may stand as high in the esteem of that being, who "judgeth not by outward appearance, but judgeth righteous judgment, as those who make the greatest figure in the world." They will be so far from insulting and despising the needy, that they will do all in their power to render their condition tolerable and easy, by treating them with mildness and gentleness, courtesy and kindness. They will not only carefully avoid all abuses of their power, to the injury of their inferiors, but will take delight in employing their abundance, for the relief and assistance of the destitute and afflicted.

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If we look no further than our own interest, and only enquire what is the most prudent and advantageous use of riches, we shall find that no man knows how to abound, but he who employs them for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. For a proof of this, we may appeal to the experience of the humane and compassionate. You, whose hearts and hands are always open to works of charity and kindness, and who employ frugality and prudence as handmaids to benevolence, say, whether the pleasure which you have felt, when you have sent away the poor and needy from your door refreshed and comforted; when you have sought out the obscure retreat of humble want, and silent affliction, and granted them a seasonable and unsolicited relief; when you have tenderly pitied, and generously assisted such as had been involved in unavoidable difficulties; when you have contributed

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tributed to the support and encouragement of honest industry; or when you have espoused and defended the cause of the injured and oppressed, or the fatherless and the widow; say, whether the pleasure which you have felt, in such acts of liberality, hath not been infinitely superior to all the gratifications of ambition and pride, of luxury and extravagance, of riot and intemperance? Hath not the performance of humane and generous actions filled your hearts with unspeakable satisfaction and delight? Nay, may we not still farther appeal even to the man, who is governed by selfish and avaricious principles, and who is generally blind to the calamities and deaf to the intreaties of his fellow-creatures, whether, when compassion and charity have made a transient visit to his heart, and prompted him to some uncommon act of generosity, he hath not been better pleased with himself,

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self, and spent the day, which hath been thus distinguished, more chearfully, than on any other occasion whatsoever.

Suppose yourselves stripped of all your present possessions, and reduced to a state of dependence, want, and misery ; what kind of reflections would you wish to be able to make, on such a reverse of fortune ? Would they not be such as these ? “ When
 “ the ear heard me then it blessed me,
 “ and when the eye saw me, it gave
 “ witness to me, because I delivered
 “ the poor that cried, and the father-
 “ less and him that had none to help
 “ him. The blessing of him that was
 “ ready to perish came upon me, and
 “ I caused the widow’s heart to sing
 “ for joy. I was eyes to the blind,
 “ and feet was I to the lame ; I was a
 “ father to the poor, and the cause
 “ which I knew not, I searched out.”

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Imagine yourselves in the presence of God, the judge of all, to receive the final reward of your actions: would you not, in these circumstances, rejoice to reflect that you have been “rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you might lay hold on eternal life?” Would you not esteem it an unspeakable happiness, to have a series of humane and benevolent actions, which you have performed towards your fellow-creatures on earth, brought to light and applauded by your judge, and to be admitted into the everlasting habitations of good men, who “rest from their labours, and whose works follow them?” “If then thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly; so shalt thou lay up a good treasure for thyself against the day of necessity.”

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On the whole, the sum of our duty, in a state of prosperity and affluence, is this ; To be humble, moderate and temperate ; not to trust in uncertain riches ; to receive them with gratitude as the gifts of heaven, and improve them as talents committed to our care by the great Lord of all ; to abstain from pride, injustice, and oppression ; and to delight in doing all the kind offices in our power. If we attentively observe and practise these rules, we may with propriety adopt the language of the Apostle ; “ I know how to abound.” And when we shall hereafter be called to give an account of our trust, we shall receive this delightful sentence of approbation, “ Well done good and faithful servants ! enter ye into the joy of your Lord !”

That we may all be thus approved,
 may God of his infinite mercy grant!

S E R M O N

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ON THE TEMPER OF CHRIST.

Melius homines exemplis docentur.

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S E R M O N IX.

PHILIPPIANS II. 5.

*Let this mind be in you which was also
in Christ Jesus.*

THE real merit of every character is to be determined solely by the temper of the mind. The splendors of an exalted station, and the gratifications and luxuries which wealth procures, may attract our admiration and excite our envy. Superiority and dominion may command the external marks of deference and submission. Uncommon strength of understanding,
or

or surprizing powers of genius, may entitle a man to our respect, and lead us to value him, as an agreeable companion and a useful member of society. But it is only the genuine virtues of the heart, manifested by a course of laudable and worthy actions, which can engage our esteem and love. The most liberal endowments of nature, the most complete accomplishments of art, and the largest gifts of fortune, without a good heart, are nothing. Whereas, uprightness of intention, generosity and benevolence of disposition, and virtuous habits of mind, will give a man real worth, though every thing else be wanting. For, in the judgment of impartial reason, and in the sight of Almighty God, the mind alone is the standard of the man.

Measured by this standard, how do some of the most renowned heroes of
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antiquity, whose names are immortalized in the records of glory, shrink away and disappear! For, those who could sacrifice the happiness of families, the peace and prosperity of states, and even the lives of thousands, at the shrine of ambition, whatever degree of valour or sagacity they might boast, could surely have little pretensions to goodness of heart. Weighed in this balance, what multitudes of those who have acquired the highest reputation for wisdom and knowledge, will be found wanting! For facts have alas! too frequently proved, that amiable and virtuous dispositions are not the certain and necessary offspring of an enlightened understanding.

There is, however, a character, which will bear to be examined by this test, and which will appear upon examination to have been possessed of the highest degrees of merit; I mean, the
character

character of Jesus Christ. From the history of his life and death it is manifest, that his heart was the seat of every amiable and worthy affection, and that, on this account, his example deserves our utmost respect, and our constant and careful imitation. Particularly, we learn from the christian history,

In the first place, That the temper of Christ was *humble*. This was the part of his character, which the Apostle *Paul* particularly recommended to the *Philippians* in the text: "Let this mind
" be in you which was also in Christ
" Jesus, who, being found in fashion
" as a man, humbled himself, and be-
" came obedient unto death, even the
" death of the cross." His humility was manifested in all the actions of his life, and spread a peculiar grace and beauty over every other virtue which adorned his character. He submitted

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to all the inconveniencies of a lowly condition, without casting an envious eye upon the riches and honours which others possessed. He performed offices of kindness towards those around him, without assuming that haughtiness of behaviour, with which too many are apt to treat those on whom they have conferred an obligation. Instead of taking pains to spread abroad the fame of his mighty deeds, he frequently charged those, who had received the benefit of his healing power, to tell no man by what means they were made whole. Far from soliciting and courting popular applause, he always seemed to despise it; and when his wonderful works extorted the acclamations of the multitude, or the praises of his friends, he was always careful to remind them, that it was not he who did them, but his father that sent him. When the two sons of *Zebedee*, in the pride of their

T hearts,

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hearts, solicited for places of eminence
 in his kingdom, he rebuked their am-
 bition, by saying unto them, "Ye
 " know not what ye ask." And when
 there was a strife among his disciples,
 which of them should be accounted
 the greatest, he sharply reprov'd the
 proud and lordly spirit which they dis-
 covered, and taught them humility by
 referring them to his own example.
 "Whether is greater, he that sitteth
 " at meat, or he that serveth? Is not
 " he that sitteth at meat? But I am
 " among you as he that serveth."
 And, to convince his disciples, that
 there was no virtue which was
 higher in his estimation, or which he
 was more desirous they should culti-
 vate, than humility; just before his
 crucifixion he performed the servile
 office of washing their feet, and closed
 this striking lesson of condescension,
 by saying, "I have given you an ex-
 " ample, that ye should do as I have
 " done

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“done unto you.” Thus did the life of Christ manifest his humility, and speak this language to his followers, “Learn of me, for I am lowly of heart.”

Farther, The temper of Christ was *meek* and *peaceable*. The general tenor of his doctrine, and the whole course of his life, refuted the malicious accusation, which was brought against him before *Pilate*, that he stirred up the people. He inculcated, in the strongest terms, a peaceable and submissive temper upon his disciples. And, tho’ he met with insults, which many would think abundantly sufficient to excuse and even to warrant resentment, he never deviated, in his conduct, from the doctrine which he taught. So far was he from encouraging a spirit of insurrection and rebellion among the populace, that he taught his followers, that his kingdom

was not of this world. When the *Samaritans* refused him entertainment, in one of their villages, because he was a *Jew*, his disciples, *James* and *John*, immediately resented their conduct, and would have called down the vengeance of heaven upon them. But Jesus bore the affront with the greatest calmness; and, instead of taking revenge upon his adversaries, he thus reproved his friends for the vehemence of their resentment; “Ye know not
 “ what manner of spirits ye are of.”
 When the officers came to him to make him prisoner, he neither made use of violent measures to deliver himself out of their hands, nor would suffer any of his disciples to draw the sword in his defence. One of them, from the abundance of his affection for his master, on this occasion, struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear; but Christ, instead of commending his zeal, rebuked his rashness,

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ness, and said unto him, "Put up
"again thy sword into its place."

But our Saviour's meekness was most illustriously displayed, in the last scenes of his life. Before *Pilate* he was falsely accused by his enemies. His judge, who was not under the prejudices of the *Jewish* nation; from whom therefore he might have expected an impartial judgment; tho' he saw and confessed his innocence, had not the fortitude to espouse his cause and grant him a release, but gave him up a sacrifice to the prejudiced and enraged multitude. Yet, in the midst of all this unjust and cruel treatment, *Jesus* maintained an absolute command over himself, and held his peace. Nay, at the close of his sufferings, when his enemies treated him with scorn and contempt; cloathing him in a purple robe; placing a crown of thorns on his head; putting

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a reed in his hand, and hailing him King of the *Jews*; when they added cruelty and barbarity to their insolence; spitting upon him; giving him vinegar and gall to drink, and smiting him on the head; in the midst of all these insults, he preserved the composure of his mind, and suffered not an angry word to fall from his lips. “When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”

And as the temper of Christ was meek and gentle, so it was firm and *heroic*. When, in obedience to the will of his Father, he assumed the important character of the Saviour of the world, he was well assured,
from

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from the nature of his undertaking, that he must be exposed to continual labour and fatigue, reproach and persecution. He knew that he must be despised and contemned by the great, hated and opposed by the priests, and abused and insulted by the populace. He foresaw that bonds, imprisonment, and death, must await him. Yet none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto him, that he might accomplish his important and benevolent design. He frequently foretold his own death, without discovering the least signs of timidity or cowardice. When he saw the malice of the priests, and the fury of the people, gathering like a thick cloud about him, and threatening his destruction, he still continued to support the character of a Teacher sent from God. In the immediate prospect of his last sufferings, he conversed with his disciples with the greatest composure and

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and chearfulness; he spoke concerning his death as a pleasing event, and commanded his friends to rejoice, because he was going to the Father. And though, just before the trying scene, nature recoiled at the prospect of the agonies which awaited him, his fortitude and piety soon enabled him to say; "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" When he was actually betrayed by the artifice and treachery of *Judas*, with what calmness and serenity did he give himself up into the hands of his enemies! with what unshaken firmness of mind did he appear before his judge! with what heroic fortitude did he receive his sentence of condemnation, and proceed to the place of his execution! and when nature, wearied out with torture, at length sunk under its burden, with what sacred triumph did he say, "It is finished," "and give up the ghost!" To
 see

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see the Saviour of the world thus struggling with affliction, pain, and death, in their most dreadful forms, and, by the aids of conscious innocence, benevolence and piety, rising superior to them all, how instructive, how animating the sight! Who can behold it, without saying, “Worthy
“is the Lamb that was slain, to receive blessing, and honour, and glory, and power?”

But we may observe further, that the temper of Christ was *humane* and *generous*. Benevolence was the ruling principle of his heart, and it was the chief business of his life to do good. He devoted himself entirely to the service of mankind, and employed all the powers with which he was endued for their advantage. The afflictions and pains of body to which they are subject engaged a considerable share of his attention, and he went about,
healing

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healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people. He never beheld a brother in distress, without feeling his heart melt with pity towards him, and being disposed to assist and relieve him.

But his benevolence was principally employed upon much higher and more important objects. To correct the mistakes, and remove the prejudices, under which mankind had long laboured, with respect to the subjects of morality and religion; to give them just conceptions of Almighty God, and of the worship and obedience which he requires from his rational offspring; to establish pure and undefiled religion on the ruins of idolatry and superstition; to turn men from the error of their ways, and lead them to the practice of the most perfect virtue, by setting before them the solemnities of a final judgment, and

teaching

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teaching them to expect everlasting destruction, or eternal life, in the world to come, according to the deeds done in the body; in a word, to enlighten the understandings; refine the sentiments; reform the manners, and increase the happiness of mankind, were the generous and godlike purposes which animated the heart of our benevolent Saviour. In the execution of these designs he always found his highest gratification and delight. “ My
“ meat (saith he) is to do the will of
“ him that sent me, and to finish his
“ work.”

Such was his love to mankind, that he was not dismayed in the pursuit of their happiness, by the greatest hardships and difficulties; by the most undeserved reproaches and insults; nor even by the most ignominious death. He persevered in his labours of love, in the midst of the greatest discouragements

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ments and most violent opposition ; and, that he might complete his benevolent design, he voluntarily gave himself up a sacrifice to the blind resentment and malice of his enemies. When these would no longer permit him to live in the service of mankind, he chearfully submitted to die for their sakes. And surely “ greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

And his affection was far from being limited to the *Jewish* nation ; his temper was liberal and generous ; his benevolence unconfined. When an opportunity offered itself for instructing a woman of *Samaria*, he did not excuse himself by saying, “ The *Jews* have no dealings with the *Samaritans*.” The general tendency of his life and doctrine was to inculcate the principles of universal benevolence. And the services which he

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performed to mankind were of such a nature, that the good effects of them may be extended to the remotest nations, and enjoyed by the most distant posterity. He was, therefore, in the highest sense, worthy of the title which is given him in Scripture, The Saviour of the world.

But though our Saviour's benevolence extended to the whole human race, there were some who were more immediately distinguished by his personal notice and affection; and from his behaviour towards them we may infer, that his temper was *friendly*. Out of the multitude who became his disciples, he selected twelve for his more constant companions, and intimate friends. These he employed to assist him in preaching the gospel. With these he often conversed with the utmost freedom and confidence. When their conduct was, in any re-

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spect, worthy of blame, he rebuked them with fidelity and tenderness. And having long experienced the sincerity of their attachment to him, he took a particular and solemn farewell of them just before his death, in which he gave them the strongest proofs of his affection. He addressed them by the endearing appellations of friends and children. He strongly recommended to them mutual forbearance and love. He comforted them under the prospect of losing their guide, their master, and their friend, and being left as sheep without a shepherd, in the midst of their enemies, by assuring them, that he would come again, and receive them to himself, and by offering up the most benevolent intercessions on their behalf to his heavenly Father. In the midst of all his sufferings, his heart was full of affection for his disciples. When he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies,

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he was much more concerned for the safety of his friends than for his own, and said unto the officers, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." While he was himself unjustly accused and condemned in the court of *Pilate*, he was attentive to the conduct of *Peter*, and rebuked his ungenerous and cowardly denial of him, by a look which pierced him to the heart, and constrained him to go out and weep bitterly. There cannot be a more affecting instance of filial affection, than the concern Christ discovered for the safety of his mother, while he hung upon the cross. "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son; then said he to the disciple, Behold thy mother." What a pleasing picture doth this tender and affectionate language, uttered at this critical season, give us of the heart of Jesus!

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To this we may add, that our Saviour exercised a *forgiving temper* towards his enemies. We have an incontestible proof of this in the manner in which he behaved towards his countrymen, notwithstanding all the ungrateful treatment, and the unprovoked insults, which he received from them. For, though “he was despised and rejected of men,” he still “went about doing good.” But the most striking instance of his forgiving temper we meet with in the last scene of his sufferings. When his enemies loaded him with all the reproach and contempt which their malice could invent; when they increased the tortures of crucifixion by their wanton cruelty, and seemed to sport with his misfortune; instead of expressing that resentment which such inhumanity might have provoked, he manifested his hearty forgiveness of them, by praying that their sin might not be
laid

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laid to their charge, and pleading the only excuse which could possibly be alledged in their behalf; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In the last place, the temper of Christ was *pious* and *devout*. His whole life was one continued course of obedience to the will of God. Every benevolent action which he performed towards mankind, proceeded from a regard to the divine authority, and was, in his estimation, doing the will of him that sent him. And it was his greatest consolation and joy, at the close of his life, that he could make this appeal to heaven: "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He ascribed all his wisdom and power to Almighty God. "My doctrine (saith he) is not mine, but his that sent me. The son can do

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“ nothing of himself, but the Father
 “ which sent him he doeth the works.”
 He frequently retired from the active
 services to which he had devoted his
 life, for the purposes of devotion. He
 committed himself to the direction of
 his heavenly Father, in the execution
 of his office, and relied on his wisdom
 and goodness for the success of his un-
 dertaking. He supported himself un-
 der all his tribulations, by the assu-
 rance which he had of the divine ap-
 probation, and by the hope of the joy
 which was set before him. And even
 in the immediate expectation of the
 most painful sufferings and cruel death,
 he said, with the most perfect resigna-
 tion, “ Not my will, but thine be
 “ done.”

Such, my brethren, was the temper;
 such was the heart of Jesus. It was
 humble—meek—peaceable—heroic—
 benevolent—friendly—forgiving-- and
 pious.

pious. “ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Contemplate the actions of his life, till you have imbibed his sentiments; till you are inspired with his spirit. This will give you a more just claim to the character of christians, than the most zealous profession of particular systems of faith, or the most exact observance of external rites and forms of religion. This will secure you the approbation of that Being, who knoweth the secrets of all hearts, and, before all things, requireth a pure and upright mind. And, finally, this will prepare you for a state of perfect virtue and consummate felicity in the world to come :

To which may God, in his great mercy, conduct us all ! Amen.

S E R M O N X.

ON THE IMITATION OF GOD.

Εὖ γὰρ δὴ ὁ ἀποφηνάμενος, τὶ θεοῖς ὅμοιον ἔχοιμεν,
“εὐεργεσίαν,” εἶπε, “καὶ ἀλήθειαν.”

PYTHAG. ap. LONGIN.

S. R. M. O. N. X.

ON THE IMITATION OF GOD.

By the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.
of the Society of Friends.
LONDON: Printed by J. O. Smith, in Pall-mall.

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S E R M O N X.

EPHESIANS v. 1.

Be ye therefore followers of God.

IT is evident from experience, that there is a natural and powerful propensity in the human mind towards imitation. This principle appears with the first dawn of reason, and accompanies us through all the stages of life. It establishes the opinions of the greater part of mankind, on almost every subject of enquiry; and particularly on that which is of the highest importance, religion. Nay, it is this principle

ciple which is chiefly concerned in forming the tempers and characters of men. Children naturally pursue the same track with their parents; and, at least in the earlier part of life generally imitate their virtues and their faults, without distinction. And, when it might be expected that we should learn to think and act for ourselves, we have seldom resolution sufficient seriously to apply to the study of wisdom; we choose rather to be led by the humours and passions of others, than to obey the dictates of our own reason; to “follow a multitude, tho’ it be to do evil,” than to be at the pains of “pondering the path of our feet, that all our ways may be established.”

Now, since this is the real state of human nature, and since every attempt to eradicate this principle from our minds would be absurd and fruitless; we

we ought to make it sub-servient to the interests of virtue, by continually placing the most excellent examples before our eyes. We should attentively observe the conduct of those around us, who are distinguished by their piety and goodness; we should frequently converse with the history of past ages, and bring before our imaginations the most venerable and worthy characters of antiquity; and, more especially, we should contemplate the perfect pattern which our Saviour hath set before us, to inspire ourselves with a spirit of emulation, and an earnest desire of making the highest possible attainments in virtue. But the character which is, of all others, most worthy of our imitation, is that to which the Apostle directs the attention of his fellow-christians, in the text; “Be ye therefore followers of God.”

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The Almighty is, doubtless, in many respects, infinitely exalted above our imitation, or even our conceptions. That boundless power, which formed and sustains the universe ; that presence, which filleth heaven and earth ; that wisdom, which maintains the order and beauty of nature, without the least interruption or deviation ; are attributes, which it is impossible for us to imitate ; of which we must always have confused and imperfect ideas. “ Such knowledge is too wonderful for us ; it is high, we cannot attain unto it.” Nevertheless, this great Being hath not wholly withdrawn himself from the view of mortals, or hidden his glories in impenetrable darkness. Whatever it is of importance for us to know concerning him is sufficiently manifested, in the frame and constitution of the world, in the conduct of his providence, and in the holy scriptures. And, if we place

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place him before our view in the light in which these represent him, we shall behold the most glorious and excellent, the most amiable and delightful object, which we can possibly contemplate; we shall have a pattern before us worthy of our most constant and careful imitation.

Let us then, at this time, apply our attention to this interesting subject; and survey, with reverence, admiration, and love, that exalted and perfect character which the Apostle, in the text, recommends to our imitation.

If we would express the divine character in one comprehensive word, we cannot do it so properly, as in the language of the Apostle *John*; "GOD" "IS LOVE." May we not reasonably conclude, that the Almighty *is* good, since we have so many convincing proofs that he *doth* good continually?

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If we attentively observe the works of his hands, will they not teach us, that the only principle which influences him in all his operations is benevolence? Why hath he formed such an infinite variety of creatures, all capable of enjoyment, according to their several natures, and made the most abundant provision for their support and comfort? To what shall we ascribe it, that the Father of all upholdeth the world which he hath made, by his power, and watcheth over his whole family in heaven and in earth, by his providence? Wherefore is it, that he “causeth grafs to grow for cattle, and “herb for the service of man;” that he “openeth his hand, and satisfieth “the desire of every living thing;” that he “daily loadeth us with his benefits,” and “giveth us richly all “things to enjoy? It is “because his “mercy endureth for ever.”

And

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And have we not sufficient evidence to prove, that the same disposition to communicate happiness, which appears in the established course of nature, likewise directs the Supreme Being, in the moral government of his rational offspring? Is it on account of any benefit, which the great First Cause of all things, and Fountain of all good, can receive from us, that he demands our obedience? “Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any advantage to the Almighty, that we are righteous? or is it gain to him, that we make our way perfect?” It is impossible. Why then doth he require from us an exact conformity to the eternal laws of virtue, but because he knows, that by disobeying them we shall certainly involve ourselves in misery, and that a strict and constant observance of them is the

only way to secure our own peace and welfare?

Shall we not, likewise, ascribe it to the most perfect benevolence, and tender mercy, that the Almighty raised up his Son Jesus Christ to be the Messenger of truth and grace unto the world? Wherefore did he appoint him to become the divine Instructor and Saviour of mankind? Wherefore did he endue him with wisdom and power equal to these important characters? Wherefore did he employ him to lead men to the true knowledge and practice of religion; to exhibit before them a most perfect pattern of all virtue; to give them the most useful and important precepts for the conduct of life; and to enforce a regard to them, by denouncing final condemnation upon all the workers of iniquity, and promising eternal life to all the righteous? Wherefore hath he thus amply
pro-

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provided for our moral and religious improvement, and our final happiness? Because " he delighteth in mercy." " In this was the love of God manifested towards us, because that God sent his well beloved Son into the world, that we might live through him."

Nay, may we not add, that the Almighty manifests his goodness and mercy, even in the punishments which he inflicts upon the wicked? He doth not punish them to indulge a vindictive disposition in himself, or to satisfy his own justice. He knows no other justice, than that which the reformation of offenders, or the general good of his creatures, requires. He is " the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And, when
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it becomes necessary that he should cause the wicked to "reap the fruit of his doings," he always proportions the punishment to the character and circumstances of the offender, and even "in the midst of judgment remembers mercy."

Such are the conceptions, which the works of nature, the dispensations of providence, and the language of the holy scriptures, concur to give us of Almighty God. They instruct us to conceive of him as a being who delighteth in the exercise of goodness; who employeth his infinite wisdom and power in the accomplishment of his benevolent purposes; who is righteous and merciful, even in the judgments which he executeth; and, in a word, who is "good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works."

Wherein,

Wherein, then, doth the imitation of the Supreme Being consist? By what means shall we obey the precept of the text, and become "followers of God?" Most certainly by being and doing good. The fairest image of God on earth is the heart of a good man. Would you therefore, be followers of God, as dear children—"walk in love." Cultivate that benevolence in your own minds, which you admire and esteem in the Father of mercies. "Put away far from you, "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, "and evil-speaking, with all malice; "and be kindly affectioned one to- "wards another." Let your goodwill for your brethren always restrain you from acts of injustice, fraud, or violence, and prompt you to "render "unto all their due." Accustom yourselves to regard the interests of others as your own. Labour to acquire that sensibility and generosity of disposition, which

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which will render you active in the service of others, and lead you, as you have opportunity, to do good unto all men. Live to make your relatives and friends, and all with whom you are connected, happy. More especially, cultivate that humane and compassionate temper, which will incline you to employ your utmost abilities for the assistance and relief of the necessitous and afflicted. Exclude not even the unkind and undeserving from your charitable notice. “ Love
 “ your enemies ; bless them that curse
 “ you ; do good to them that hate
 “ you ; and pray for them which de-
 “ spitefully use you and persecute
 “ you ; that ye may be the children of
 “ your Father which is in heaven ; for
 “ he maketh his sun to rise on the evil,
 “ and on the good, and sendeth rain
 “ on the just and on the unjust.” Learn
 to exercise forbearance and forgiveness
 towards those who have injured or of-
 fended

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fended you, from the example of him, who is “ slow to anger, and ready to “ forgive.” Finally, if, at any time, your own security, or the peace and welfare of society require that you should take some notice of the injuries which have been offered you; let your resentment be governed by reason, and restrained by benevolence; pursue the most probable methods in your power to reclaim your adversary; and treat him with all the lenity which the nature of the case will permit.

Thus uniformly to desire and pursue the happiness of all around us, and to take pleasure in doing good, is to resemble the greatest and best of all beings; it is to manifest that we are, indeed, the children of God, by bearing his image, in that perfection which is his highest glory; it is, according to our nature and capacity,
to

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to “ be perfect as our Father which is
“ in heaven is perfect.”

And where can we find an object
so well worthy of our imitation, as
the Supreme Being? The brightest
characters, among our fellow-creatures,
are shaded with imperfections. In the
imitation of these, it is requisite that we
should use great caution and circum-
spection, lest, while we imagine that
we are emulating their virtues, we
should only be copying their faults.
But we may imitate the Divine Cha-
racter, without the least danger of be-
ing led astray. Nay, the more closely
we adhere to this pattern, the more
amiable and excellent shall we become.
Nor is it possible, while we have this
perfect example before our eyes, that
we should ever want an object to fire
our emulation, or a motive to excite
our industry: for to whatever heights
of goodness we may arrive, we shall
be

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be still far short of the mark at which we aim ; we shall have a field of improvement before us boundless as eternity itself.

Is not the Almighty the source and standard of all excellence? Doth not every thing which is fair and beautiful in the material, and every thing which is lovely and excellent in the intellectual world, proceed from the great Author of nature? If then we meet with so much to excite our admiration, and attract our love, in the creature, what excellence and perfection must reside in the Creator! How amiable, how glorious must be the Eternal Father, in whom all that is beautiful and good centres, and from whom, as from an inexhaustible fountain, it is diffused throughout the universe! What more effectual method can we pursue, to exalt our nature, and acquire intrinsic and eminent

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worth, than to “set the Lord always
“before us?” Or what higher satisfaction can we possibly feel, than that which ariseth from a consciousness, of having the image of God impressed upon our hearts? Surely the man, who can trace a resemblance to the Supreme Being in his own character, may contemplate the likeness with a laudable and virtuous pride, and, in the meanest or most afflicted condition of human life, may be satisfied from himself.

Farther, is not the imitation of God the most probable means of gaining the esteem and affection of all wise and good men? Is there any thing which can be said concerning a man, which will give the world higher idea of his character than this, that he is possessed of a divine and godlike temper? The man who, from the overflowings of a benevolent heart, is continually

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tinually diffusing streams of happiness through the little circle of his friends and acquaintance, and, like the Almighty Father of all, takes delight in doing good, is an object of universal esteem and love. His name is always mentioned with respect; his company is every where acceptable; his friendship is highly valued; every good man rejoices in his prosperity; when he falls into calamity, every tender and generous heart laments his misfortunes, and is willing to assist him; and when he leaves the world, his good deeds are had in everlasting remembrance. How then, can the most boundless ambition be more completely gratified, than by the imitation of the divine goodness?

Moreover, are not those who are followers of God, in the certain road to happiness? The most natural and obvious idea which we can form of

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the divine felicity is, that it consisteth in a consciousness of being able and disposed to communicate happiness to the whole creation, and in the actual exertion of unlimited power, for this purpose. And it is likewise manifest, that the nearer we approach to the Almighty in goodness, the greater satisfaction and felicity we shall enjoy. Doth not the experience of every good man testify, that there is nothing, which can afford us such substantial and satisfying delight, as the performance of kind and generous actions?

Visit the habitations of honest poverty, in which an affectionate and virtuous pair are employing all their industry and strength, to provide a coarse and scanty subsistence for themselves and their numerous offspring. If you find their brows wrinkled with care, and their hearts oppressed with
anxiety,

anxiety, introduce among them the welcome stranger, joy; if you see them contented and thankful in their humble station, and uniting their utmost endeavours to make it as easy and happy as possible, reward their industry and chearfulness; by an unexpected and liberal benefaction.

If you have a friend, who hath met with misfortunes and losses, and is reduced to circumstances of great perplexity and want; visit him with the same freedom, and converse with him with the same confidence and affection, as in the days of his prosperity; convince him that you are not one of those summer-friends, who, when the winter of adversity approacheth, disappear; employ yourself, with zeal and spirit, in his service; and contribute, to the utmost of your ability, towards his relief.

Go to the house of mourning, and there “weep with those who weep.” Tenderly sympathize with such as are lamenting the loss of relatives or friends; endeavour to sooth and alleviate their sorrows, and to minister consolation to their hearts. “Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction;” and, if you have opportunity, lighten the burden of their griefs, by affording them your assistance and protection. If you see them in danger of suffering by the cruel hand of injustice or oppression, become their guardian and defender; and thus “cause the widow’s heart to sing for joy,” and bring “the blessing of him that was ready to perish upon you.”

By such actions as these, imitate the example of *Jesus*, who “went about doing good,” and of the Father of mankind, whose mercy is everlasting.

You

You will then enjoy the most satisfactory and delightful conviction, that there is a divine pleasure in beneficence, with which no other gratification deserves to be compared, and that goodness, independent of all its consequences, is its own reward. You will then understand the meaning of this saying of a *Roman* Emperor; “No music is so pleasing in mine ears as the requests of my friends, and the supplications of those who need my assistance.”

To this we may add, in the last place, that the Supreme Being, who is conscious of his own excellence and perfection, must, doubtless take pleasure in beholding his image upon his offspring, and must be always ready to assist, encourage, and reward their endeavours to acquire a more complete resemblance of himself. Accordingly, we have seen, that, in the established

blished course of things, and by the appointment of God, to imitate the divine goodness is to secure the comfort and happiness of this life. And we are taught by the holy scriptures, that those who are like unto God on earth, shall dwell with him for ever, in his heavenly kingdom.

The sum of what hath been said is this, that the Imitation of God is the noblest employment of our rational powers; the sure foundation of esteem among men; a never-failing source of peace and happiness to our own minds; and the certain way to obtain the approbation of the Almighty, and prepare ourselves for everlasting life:

“ Be ye *therefore* followers of God.”

S E R M O N X I.

ON HAPPINESS.

O Curas hominum ! O quantum est in rebus inane !

P E R S.

IX MONTHS

S E R M O N X I.

LUKE X. 41, 42.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful ; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

AS there is nothing in which mankind are more universally agreed, than in their desire of happiness ; so there is scarcely any thing wherein they differ more, than in the objects from which they seek their chief good. One man is fond of ease
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and indulgence, and fancies that, if he can divest his heart of care, and command those things which are necessary to the gratification of his appetites, he shall be happy. Another makes riches the principal object of his pursuit, and sets no bounds to his avaricious desires. From year to year he labours and toils to increase his stores; till that, which he at first pursued only as a subordinate means of happiness, becomes itself the sole object of his affection, and he lives for no other purpose than to be rich. A third is captivated by the charms of grandeur and power. A numerous retinue, magnificent edifices, elegance of dress, and titles of distinction, are the things which chiefly attract his notice, and excite his envy. To enjoy the smiles of his superiors; to have a number of needy and fawning sycophants waiting around him; to exercise an uncontrouled dominion over his dependents;

dents ; to command respect and deference wherever he comes ; and to be able to raise the ignorant admiration, and gain the unmeaning applause of the vulgar ; this is the sum of his wishes, and the height of his ambition. Another, convinced of the folly of these pursuits, or averse to the hurry and dissipation of active life, withdraws himself from the world, and devotes his days to contemplation and study. Despising alike the delusive dreams of pleasure, the dazzling splendors of greatness, and the sordid love of gain, he seeks a happiness more worthy of his rational nature, in a diligent enquiry after truth, and a careful cultivation of his intellectual powers.

Nay, we not only see this variety of opinions and pursuits in different persons, but we may frequently observe it in the same individual, at different

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ferent

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ferent periods of his life, or upon any remarkable change in his condition. The gayety and extravagance of youthful pleasures are often succeeded by the carefulness and solicitude of avarice ; and disappointed ambition frequently creates a dissatisfaction with the world, and a fondness for the employments and amusements of contemplative life. Thus do men wander from place to place, and from object to object, in pursuit of happiness, and, like the woman whom our Saviour addressed in the words of the text, are “ careful and troubled about many things.”

Since this is the case, it is, doubtless, of great importance that we should form a just estimate concerning the real value of the several objects, which invite our attention as sources or means of happiness. This alone can preserve us from groundless expectations, fruitless

less pursuits, and painful disappointments. Now, to assist us in determining the intrinsic and comparative worth of the several good things which lie within the reach of mankind, and to enable us to judge what is worthy of our principal attention, and what may with propriety be stiled our chief good, let us fix upon some general rules or marks, by which, as by a common standard, every thing which seems to promise happiness to mankind may be measured.

It cannot be difficult to determine what are the proper rules of judging on this head. Every man would, doubtless, wish to find the object in which he places his chief felicity possessed of such properties as these; that it should be adapted to afford him satisfaction and enjoyment, or should be *conducive to his well-being*; that it should be *agreeable to his nature*; that

it should be *derived from himself*, and entirely *independent* upon the will of others; that it should continue *the same at all times, and in all places*; and that it should be *capable of being enjoyed, as long as he continues to exist.* (a)

It is evident, that those objects alone, which have some tendency, either real or imaginary, to promote our enjoyment, pleasure, or satisfaction, are concerned in the question before us. And, it is scarcely less evident, that only those pursuits, which are agreeable to our nature, can be productive of our happiness. For, every creature being formed for the enjoyment of a felicity suited to its nature, and incapable of any other, every deviation from nature must be a diminution of its happiness. It is also very desirable, that our happiness should spring from ourselves, and not

(a) See *Harris's Dialogue on Happiness.*

from

from the uncertain and capricious humours of our fellow-creatures, or from any other external cause. And it is of great importance that it should be of such a stable and permanent nature, that no change of place or circumstances should be able to rob us of our treasure. It should accompany us through all the active scenes of life, and follow us into our most solitary and silent retreat: it should attend us through all the vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity: it should be the joy of our youthful days, the comfort of our riper years, and the support of our advanced age: it should be our companion on the bed of sickness, and in the vale of death; and it should never forsake us, while we are capable of perceiving the difference between happiness and misery; that is, while we have any being. Whatever is defective in any of these particulars is so far incapable of yielding us true

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felicity,

felicity, and unworthy of being pursued as our chief good.

Let us apply these rules to the several objects which are most eagerly pursued by mankind, and from which they seem to entertain the most sanguine expectations of happiness.

Let us, in the first place, examine *the pursuits of ambition*. It will not be denied that there is a real gratification, especially to some minds, in a consciousness of superiority and dominion. A man, whose ruling principle is pride and vanity, when he is surrounded with the dazzling distinctions of greatness and power; courted, caressed and flattered by his friends and dependents; and admired, applauded and obeyed by the multitude; will naturally be elated with the idea of his own importance, and feel his heart flutter with tumultuous joy.
But

But if on the other hand, we consider the constant anxieties, and frequent disappointments, which attend the pursuits of honour ; the danger, which those who are eager in this pursuit run, of violating their consciences, and laying a foundation for painful reflections ; the perpetual hurry and fatigue of an exalted and public station ; and the mortification which always accompanies the loss of dignity and power ; if we lay all these circumstances into the balance against the gratifications of ambition, we may perhaps see reason to question whether they are on the whole to be desired.

However, if it be allowed that ambition is in itself a natural passion and productive of real pleasure, it cannot be denied, that it frequently leads men astray from the paths which nature and reason have pointed out, and tempts them to violate the sacred laws
of

of justice, honour, and benevolence. Diffimulation and flattery, falsehood and fraud, violence and oppression are too frequently the steps to preferment and power. But, supposing it possible for us to obtain them without the least departure from nature, we shall, nevertheless, find them very insufficient sources of happiness, in many other respects.

They are not derived from ourselves, and therefore are not at our own command. It is, at any time, in the power of caprice or malice, or of a thousand unavoidable accidents, to disconcert our schemes and frustrate our expectations. So that, if we have reached the summit of human glory, we must ask leave of the world to continue there. And besides this, how long soever we may be suffered to possess the station which we have gained, it is only while we are actually surrounded

rounded with the splendors, and partaking of the honours, which wait upon greatness and authority, that they are capable of affording us pleasure and enjoyment. When we are withdrawn from the world, and retired within ourselves; when our passions are hushed, and reason is suffered to resume her seat, the lustre of these objects disappears; we feel that they can entertain and delight us, no longer than while they are beheld by others as well as ourselves; the mind wants something more substantial, than outward appearances and empty titles, on which to rest, and looks with indifference on all the imaginary distinctions, which subsist in human life. And, how much more will this be the case, when the gay and busy scenes of public life shall be exchanged for the retirement of a sick room; when all our flattering prospects, and towering hopes, must be buried with
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us in the grave! What will it then avail a man that he hath lived in splendor, and fared sumptuously every day? Will the remembrance of this alleviate his pains, support his departing spirit, or give him confidence towards God? Will not all the glories of this world then vanish for ever, like a dream and vision of the night?

Let us now turn our thoughts to *the pursuits of avarice*, and examine what pretensions riches have to be chosen as our chief good. Few persons will be seriously disposed to question, whether riches are to be desired and sought as means of enjoyment and happiness. They are doubtless capable of being applied to almost every important purpose of life, and, by a prudent management, may become subservient to the pleasures of animal nature, of intellectual improvement, of friendship, and even of virtue

tue and religion. Nor can it be matter of debate, whether it be agreeable to nature to pursue that which, in so many important respects, is capable of contributing to our happiness. It is indeed true, that wealth may be pursued in a manner inconsistent with nature and reason, as it always is, when injustice, oppression, and cruelty are made use of to attain it; and that it may be employed to the prejudice of its possessors and the injury of mankind: but it is no less true, that it may be pursued and obtained with innocence, and may be applied to the most laudable and beneficial purposes.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that the acquisition and secure enjoyment of wealth depends, not upon ourselves alone, but upon a great variety of external circumstances. A single incident, which it is not in our power to prevent or foresee, may render

der those schemes abortive, which were most judiciously concerted and steadily executed. Or, whatever success we may meet with in the pursuit of wealth, we must always hold it by a most uncertain and precarious tenure. Riches, without asking the consent of their possessors, often “make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven.” The time, at least, will shortly come, when we must leave our wealth to others; “for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” And even while we are in possession of riches, what can they do to befriend us, under the unavoidable trials and calamities of life? Can they remove the pains of an afflicted body, or minister consolation to a wounded spirit? Can they supply the loss of valuable friends, or arm us against the fears of our own dissolution? In circumstances like these

these alas! all the riches and honours of the world will prove but miserable comforters. On the whole, the experience of mankind confirms the truth of *Solomon's* observation: "He
" that loveth silver shall not be satis-
" fied with silver, nor he that loveth
" abundance with increase."

The objects which next offer themselves to our consideration as fruitful sources of happiness, and which multitudes pursue as their chief good, are *the pleasures of sense*. Under this head we may comprehend every gratification of our animal appetites, and all those amusements and diversions, which are either naturally, or by means of an acquired taste, adapted to please our senses, or entertain and delight our imaginations. Now, it will be readily and thankfully acknowledged, by all who are true friends of virtue, and who sincerely revere and love the

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great Author of our nature, that these pleasures are a part of that portion of good, which is provided for us, and of which we may and ought to partake. Pleasure and happiness are terms of the same import; and it were absurd to attempt a distinction between them. To pursue these, wherever we have a prospect of finding them, must always be natural and reasonable.

But, at the same time, it is to be considered, that we are capable of nobler pleasures than those of sense, and consequently that, if we confine ourselves to these, our enjoyment must be partial and incomplete. We should likewise remember, that these objects are not in their own nature worthy of our supreme regard, and that, if we pursue them in subordination to the higher delights of reason, virtue, and religion, we shall enjoy them in their utmost perfection. We cannot entirely

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ly devote ourselves to these pleasures, without frequently departing from the superior principles of nature, honour and benevolence; and without falling into those excesses which would in the end, prove fatal to our happiness.

Moreover, these enjoyments must depend upon a variety of circumstances, which are not in our power. Fortune must have bestowed her gifts upon us with a liberal hand; our bodily constitutions must be in a healthful and vigorous state; and we must have companions to assist us in our pursuits, and partake with us in our pleasures. This species of happiness must therefore always be uncertain and precarious. And those who possess it, in the greatest perfection, must find their moments of enjoyment short and transient, and must be obliged to pass through frequent disagreeable intervals of solitude and inaction. Be-

fore the actual possession of these pleasures the mind is generally agitated with painful solicitude; and when they are past, they frequently leave it in a state of satiety and disgust. Or, if this should for a while be prevented by the vigour and sprightliness of youth, or by the charms of novelty and variety; the frequent repetition of the same scenes will at length render them insipid and tiresome; the edge of inclination and appetite must at length be blunted; the powers of perception and imagination must by degrees fail; and nature must, at last, sink into decay. The evil days shall come, when the voluptuary, who hath spent his life in one continual round of amusement and indulgence, shall say, "I have no pleasure in them."

Let us now proceed, in the last place, briefly to examine, by the same rules, *a life of retirement and contemplation.*

plation. To apply ourselves to the pursuit of knowledge is doubtless highly commendable. It is a natural and proper employment of our intellectual powers ; it may afford us a variety of rational and manly pleasures ; and it may be of important advantage to society. But even this is not worthy to be considered as our chief good. For, if mankind in general were to devote themselves entirely to contemplation and study, it is evident that the bands of social life must be dissolved ; the social affections, which are the most amiable part of our nature, must remain uncultivated ; and the numerous advantages and comforts of society must be resigned. Besides, even these pleasures, in a great measure, depend on a variety of accidental circumstances, such as health of body, strength of genius, an affluent fortune, and the encouragement and assistance of others. It would be im-

possible to enjoy them, without frequent interruptions from the necessary concerns of life; from afflictions or misfortunes; or from our unavoidable connexions with others. Nor would even these pleasures be able to accompany us to the bed of sickness or death, unless we were, at the same time, to enjoy a consciousness, that we have faithfully employed our knowledge in the service of mankind: and, in this case, our pleasures would be of a different kind from those of contemplation and science, and, would coincide with those hereafter to be recommended, as most worthy of our pursuit.

We have now examined the principal objects which engage the attention of mankind, by certain general and obvious rules, and have seen that neither honour, riches, the pleasures of sense, or even the pursuit of knowledge

ledge, are worthy to be considered as our chief good. Having weighed each of these objects in the scale of reason and truth, we have found them wanting. Wealth and power may indeed furnish us with many advantages for the enjoyment of life; the pleasures of sense are on their own account to be desired; and the cultivation of our intellectual powers is rational and useful. But let us make none of these things the principal objects of our desire and pursuit; for they will often lead us to deviate from the path of nature and truth; they are not derived from ourselves, but are dependent on a thousand external and casual circumstances; the happiness which they afford cannot be enjoyed at all times and in all places; and the continuance of it is, from the nature of things, precarious and temporary. Let us then allow to these things, only that share of our attention and regard,
which

which their real nature and intrinsic value may justly claim. Instead of wandering from object to object, in search of that happiness which they are alike incapable of affording us; instead of being careful and troubled about many things; let us steadily and uniformly apply ourselves to the pursuit of that one thing, which alone will be found, upon fair and impartial examination, to be the proper happiness of man. What this *one thing needful* is, and by what means we may obtain "that good part which cannot be taken from us," will be shewn in the following discourse.

SERMON

S E R M O N XII.

ON HAPPINESS.

Hic est aut nusquam quod querimus.

Hor.

THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE OF THE LATE
JAMES O'NEILL
ESQ. OF THE COUNTY OF
DUBLIN
BY
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S E R M O N XII.

LUKE x. 41, 42.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

WHAT is the proper happiness of mankind, or by what means we may arrive at the highest felicity of which human nature is capable, is an enquiry of the utmost importance; an enquiry to which every man must wish to receive a satisfactory answer.

To

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To assist us in forming a judgment on this interesting subject, it was proposed, in the preceding discourse, to examine the several objects or pursuits, which solicit our attention in the pleasing dress of happiness, by certain general and obvious rules, which may serve to determine their intrinsic and comparative worth. It was then observed, that whatever deserves to be stiled our chief good, must be agreeable to our nature; conducive to our well-being; derived from ourselves and independent of external causes; suited to all times, places, and conditions; and capable of being enjoyed as long as we continue to exist. By these rules we have examined the respective claims of greatness and power; of wealth and abundance; of the pleasures of sense, and of a studious and contemplative life; and found them all, in many particulars, greatly defective. But let not these repeated disappoint-

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appointments dishearten us from pursuing the important enquiry; let us not sit down in despair, and say, "Lord, why hast thou made all men in vain?" There is one candidate yet unnoticed, who solicits for the honour of being received as our *chief good*; and whose aspect seems to promise more, than any of those who have hitherto engaged our attention; her name is VIRTUE; let us examine her pretensions.

By *Virtue* we are to understand, in general, an habitual disposition and constant endeavour to do that which is right and good. To be virtuous is to perform whatever our relations and circumstances in life require from us, and, at all times, and in every condition, to act agreeably to the deliberate judgment and conviction of our own minds. Now, this uprightness of intention, together with the rectitude

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and goodness of character which necessarily flow from it, bids fair to yield us the greatest share of happiness of which human nature is capable, and appears to be worthy of our chief attention and regard, as *the one thing needful*: for,

In the first place, it is perfectly agreeable to our nature. Virtue hath often, and with the utmost propriety, been defined, acting according to nature. Every branch of a virtuous character perfectly agrees with this definition. What are the duties of *temperance* and *sobriety*, but a natural and becoming use of our rational powers in the government of our animal appetites and passions? Is it not the manifest design of our maker, that our reason should be employed for this purpose? And, in all excessive and vicious indulgences, do we not neglect the exercise of our noblest faculties,

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culties, and grossly deviate from the path in which nature would teach us to walk? As reasonable beings, what can be more natural, than that we should deliberate concerning the qualities and issues of our actions, and exercise that caution and circumspection in the conduct of life, in which *prudence*, one principal part of a virtuous character, consists? Such is the state of human nature, that we are exposed to innumerable dangers, and must inevitably meet with troubles and calamities of various kinds. Now, a timorous and pusillanimous disposition will involve us in many distresses, which we might otherwise have escaped, and will greatly increase the unavoidable burdens of life. Our nature and situation therefore requires, that we should cultivate resolution and *fortitude*.

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All the moral offices of social life have likewise, their foundation in nature. Man is evidently formed for society. In a state of perpetual solitude, the seeds of benevolence, compassion, friendship, and love would lie for ever unfolded, and there would be an uncomfortable void in the heart, which nothing would be able to fill up. Nature prompts, and even compels us to form ourselves into societies, for our mutual preservation, security, and happiness; and it is only in large and well-regulated communities, that the conveniences and pleasures of life can be enjoyed, with the greatest advantage; that useful arts can be properly encouraged and improved; and that human nature can rise to that perfection, in intellectual and moral accomplishments, of which it is capable. A state of society, then, in which the human mind can unfold and exert all its powers, and not a state of barbarism, is properly

properly a state of nature. Now, if society be natural, all those virtues which tend to promote its order and happiness must be so likewise. To abstain from acts of violence, oppression, and fraud; to be upright and honourable in all our dealings; to be faithful to our engagements, and sincere in our professions; to discharge the duties of our domestic relations with fidelity and cheerfulness; to shew compassion to the afflicted, and relieve the wants of the poor and needy: in a word, to “do unto others, as we would that they should do unto us,” is unquestionably to contribute our part towards the peace and happiness of society, and consequently to act agreeably to nature.

In fine, if we consider the duties of piety and religion, we shall find them all to be founded on the nature of things, and the relations in which we

stand to our Maker. Doth not nature teach us, to venerate infinite perfection and excellence; to be thankful for innumerable and inestimable blessings; to acknowledge and adore that providence which ruleth over all; to confide, with perfect satisfaction, in that wisdom and goodness, which ordereth all things for the best; and to submit ourselves to the will of that Being, whose laws are all holy, just, and good? Virtue, in all its branches, is then nothing more than a perfect conformity to nature.

I add, secondly, uprightness of intention, and goodness of character, are evidently conducive to our well-being. The experience of mankind, indeed, forbids us to assert, that virtue will entirely exempt us from affliction and trouble. The best of men are liable to sickness and pain of body, and may meet with losses and disappointments

ments in their affairs. The most amiable and excellent characters may be traduced by malice and slander. Great and wasting calamities may involve the righteous and the wicked in one common ruin. Tyranny, oppression, or injustice may rob even the good man of his possessions, his liberty, or his life. Integrity and virtue themselves may sometimes expose a man to difficulties, from which persons of corrupt principles, and licentious manners, are free. Nay the world hath seen instances, in which the most active public-spirit; the most disinterested benevolence; the most intrepid fortitude, and the most perfect virtue, hath been derided, insulted, and persecuted unto death. Even *Jesus*, the great teacher and pattern of all righteousness, the Saviour of the world, was with wicked hands crucified and slain. All this, however, only proves, that there is no complete

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complete happiness for mankind on earth; and it *may* still be true, that virtue is our highest felicity and chief good. Consider its nature and fruits, and you will be convinced that *it is*, and that therefore it deserves to be valued and pursued, as the “one thing needful.”

One important branch of virtue, namely, the government of ourselves, hath for its immediate object our own preservation and happiness. It is the direct and obvious tendency of sobriety and prudence, to secure to us the most perfect and lasting enjoyment of life. And those duties which respect our maker, or our brethren, are all attended with satisfaction and pleasure in the performance, and productive of beneficial consequences to ourselves. We cannot cultivate the principles of genuine piety, and perform the duties of devotion with attention and seriousness,

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ness, without experiencing the rational and sublime delights of religious veneration, gratitude, confidence, and joy. We cannot cherish the benevolent and friendly affections in our hearts, and accustom ourselves to perform the offices of kindness and humanity towards our brethren, without enjoying the noblest and most satisfying pleasures, of which human nature is capable. We cannot be conscious, that our minds are adorned with amiable and virtuous dispositions, and that we continually desire and endeavour to do that which is right, without being possessed of that peace of mind, and inward self-approbation, which are a perpetual feast. This the experience of every pious and good man sufficiently attests.

Moreover, the practice of virtue is the most probable means of securing to us the external possessions and comforts

forts of life. Health and chearfulness,
 and consequently the true enjoyment
 of all the pleasures of sense, greatly
 depend upon temperance and sobriety.
 An upright, honourable and friendly
 behaviour, can scarcely fail of gaining
 us reputation and esteem in the world;
 and a fair character is the most obvious
 and certain path to preferment and
 wealth. That these things are not
 constantly and without exception, the
 rewards of virtue, is not owing to any
 imperfection in virtue itself, but solely
 to its present imperfect state among
 mankind. It hath, however, so ma-
 nifest a tendency to procure us these
 external advantages, and so frequent-
 ly in fact obtains them, that we may
 with propriety say concerning virtue,
 "Length of days is in her right-
 hand, and in her left-hand riches
 and honour." Whether, then, we
 consider the internal pleasures, or the
 external rewards of virtue, we shall
 see

see abundant reason to conclude, that it is above all things conducive to our well-being.

In the third place; The pleasures of virtue are derived from ourselves, and independent of external causes. For the riches, the honours, or the pleasures of the world, we must often depend upon a fortunate concurrence of external causes, or upon the humour and caprice of mankind; but a man is obliged to ask leave of none but God and his own heart, to be good. While our Maker sees fit to continue unto us the use of our moral faculties, it is in our power to practise the duties, and enjoy the pleasures of a virtuous life; and this is a power, which neither the smiles of the world can give, nor its frowns take away. Treachery and slander may cast us down from the pinnacle of worldly greatness; violence or fraud may rob us of our lawful possessions;

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feſſions ; envy and ill-nature may interrupt many of the enjoyments of life. But our innocence and integrity, and that ſatisfaction and peace which are their conſtant attendants, are treaſures which we may call our own ; treaſures of which neither the malice, nor the ſubtilty of our enemies can ever deprive us. This is “ that good part which cannot be “ taken away from us.” Vice may indeed preſent her enſnaring charms before our eyes, to draw us aſide from the paths of uprightness ; or ſhe may borrow the ſcourge of ridicule, the arrows of ſlander, or the flames of perſecution, to alarm and terrify us. But, if we be fully convinced of the inſtimable value of an upright and ſelf-approving mind, and ſteadfaſtly reſolved to preſerve our integrity ; in vain will be all her allurements, and all her terrors ; none of theſe things will move us ; and we ſhall, after all,

have

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have this for “ our rejoicing, the testimony of our consciences, that in “ simplicity and godly sincerity we “ have had our conversation in the “ world.” While the votaries of avarice, ambition, and sensual pleasure, must, in a great measure, depend upon others for their happiness, it is the peculiar felicity of the good man, that he is “ satisfied from himself.” Hence it follows,

Fourthly, That the happiness which springs from virtue is suited to all times and places, and to every condition of human life. We can be in no circumstances, in which one course of action will not be more proper and becoming than any other, and, consequently, in which it will not be in our power to act a wise and virtuous part. No eminence of station, no affluence of fortune, no extent of power, can set us free from the obligations of morality

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lity and religion. And, on the other hand, however obscure our situation, or however contracted our circumstances in life may be, we shall have a certain sphere of action, which it will be our duty to fill, in the most honourable and useful manner we are able. The rich and the poor, the powerful and the dependent, the young and the old, persons of every age, rank, and condition, have their respective parts assigned them, in the great Drama of human life; and the lowest and most inconsiderable, as well as the greatest and most conspicuous characters, give us an opportunity of acquiring real honour and satisfaction from the performance; for this depends, not upon the nature of the part we are to act, but upon the manner in which we perform it. To speak without a figure; we are placed in different stations of life, by the wise Governor of the world, and have cer-
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tain duties, which it becomes us to perform in these stations. And, if we behave agreeably to our condition and situation, whatever these may be, we shall experience the pleasures which result from a consciousness of upright intentions, and the performance of good actions. And these are pleasures, to which we may have recourse, in solitude and in company, in health and in sickness, in life and in death. A peaceful self-approving mind will add new lustre to the brightest scenes, and give an additional relish to every comfort we enjoy. Its cheering light will even break through the thickest clouds of adversity, and enable us to rejoice in tribulation. The pleasures of innocence and virtue will remain with us, when every other pleasure is withdrawn. When every other support fails, a good conscience will be as an anchor to our souls, both sure

and steadfast. What though our substance be torn from us by the hand of violence, or destroyed by calamitous accidents, and poverty comes upon us like an armed man ; our most valuable treasures are still secure ; we may still be rich in good works, and happy in the peaceful reflections of our own minds ; for “ whether a man
 “ be rich or poor, if he have a good
 “ heart towards the Lord, he shall at
 “ all times rejoice with a chearful
 “ countenance.” What though we be rendered incapable of relishing the pleasures of sense, by sickness or pain ; we have still a fund of consolation and pleasure within, which is sufficient to comfort us under the heaviest afflictions, to which human nature is subject. What though our dearest and most valuable friends be taken from us ; we have still a friend in our own bosoms, who will never forsake us ;
 whose

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whose presence will cheer us through life, support us in death, and gain us admission into the mansions of eternal peace and joy. For, I add,

In the last place, That the pleasures of virtue are durable and unfading, and that we may enjoy them, as long as we continue to exist. With whatever degree of prosperity and happiness our days on earth may be crowned, the hour is coming, when riches shall not profit us, nor the pleasures of sense delight us; when friendship itself shall comfort us no more. But even at this hour, if all be right within, if our hearts condemn us not, we cannot be wretched. The righteous hath hope in his death. Conscious of the uprightness of his intentions, and the goodness of his character; enjoying the remembrance of a life devoted to the service of mankind, and adorn-

ed with a series of virtuous actions; he can leave the world in peace, and look forward, with composure, to that unknown state which lies before him. While his friends are weeping around him, and the pains of dissolution are upon him, he can maintain an unshaken firmness of mind, which will spread serenity and cheerfulness over his countenance. He can rise from the feast of human life, satisfied and thankful; and can go the way whence he shall not return, with a degree of fortitude, which nothing but conscious integrity could inspire. Fully assured that, wherever he goes, he shall carry his own virtue, and his own happiness, along with him; rejoicing in the persuasion "that he hath chosen that good part which cannot be taken away from him;" possessed of an humble hope, that his Almighty Maker will be his Everlasting Friend;

Friend; he can “ walk through the
“ valley of the shadow of death, and
“ fear no evil.” Such are the sup-
ports and consolations which virtue
affords, at the season when all things
else must fail! In such peace may the
good man die!

“ For Conscience, like a faithful friend,
“ Shall through the gloomy vale attend,
“ And cheer his dying breath;
“ Shall, when all other comforts cease,
“ Like a kind angel whisper peace,
“ And smoothe the bed of death.”

After this view of the superior ex-
cellence and importance of Virtue, in
comparison with every thing else which
is valued and desired among men; can
you, my brethren, entertain a doubt,
whether it deserves to be considered as
the *one thing needful*? Can you hesitate
a moment in determining to pursue it

as

as your chief good? Discourage not yourselves with an apprehension, that this pursuit will interrupt your attention to others, of an inferior nature. You may employ your skill and industry to increase your possessions; you may enjoy every pleasure which providence hath placed within your reach. Only remember, that your integrity and virtue are infinitely more valuable than every thing else; and let not the prospect of indulgence or profit ever tempt you to forsake the paths of innocence. Let every other pursuit, and every other care, be in subordination to this. Let your deliberate purpose be, "Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I will hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." In the midst of all the concerns and all the pleasures of life, adhere

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here steadfastly to this resolution. Whatever portion of external good may fall to your lot, still seek your chief happiness in a consciousness of upright intentions and virtuous behaviour. While you enjoy the good things of life, preserve your minds superior to, and, as much as possible, independent of them all. Place your confidence, not in the uncertain possessions, and transient pleasures of the world, but in your own uprightness and integrity, and in the goodness of your Maker. You will then find, that your hope rests upon a sure foundation, and will never make you ashamed. You will then be like unto
“ a wise man, who built his house
“ upon a rock: and the rain descended,
“ ed, and the floods came, and the
“ winds blew, and beat upon that
“ house; and it fell not, for it was
“ founded upon a rock.”

“ Hear,

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“ Hear, then, the conclusion of the
“ whole matter ; Fear God, and keep
“ his commandments ; for this is the
“ WHOLE of man.”

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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